



## the portage path behavioral health reference guide to: **Stress Management**

**S**tress is defined as the body's reaction to an event that is seen as emotionally disturbing, disquieting, or threatening. Studies show that forty-three percent of all adults suffer health effects from stress, and as many as 90 percent of all visits to primary care physicians are for stress-related complaints or disorders. Stress is now being referred to as America's number one health problem. In fact, stress has been linked to many leading causes of death, including heart disease, cancer, lung ailments, accidents, cirrhosis, and suicide.

According to the Stress Directions web site ([www.stressdirections.com](http://www.stressdirections.com)) in order to manage your stress, you must first understand what type of stress you are experiencing:

- **ACUTE STRESS:** is what most people identify as stress. Symptoms may include tension headaches, emotional upsets, gastrointestinal disturbances, feelings of agitation and pressure. It's easily treatable and can be brought under control in six to eight weeks.
- **EPISODIC ACUTE STRESS:** is more serious and can lead to migraines, hypertension, stroke, heart attack, anxiety, depression, serious gastrointestinal distress. It's quite treatable, but it takes general life style readjustments, four to six months, and often requires professional help.
- **CHRONIC STRESS:** is the most serious of all. It's the stress that never ends. It grinds us down until our resistance is gone. The immune system, emotions, and judgement may be impacted. It can be treated, even reversed, but it takes time - some times two to three years-and often requires professional help.
- **TRAUMATIC STRESS:** is the result of massive acute stress, the effects of which can reverberate through our systems for years. Post traumatic stress disorder is treatable and reversible and usually requires professional aid.

### **Psychological Signs Possibly Related to Stress**

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Apathy
- Boredom
- Depression
- Fatigue
- Frustration
- Guilt
- Hopelessness
- Hostility
- Impatience
- Irritability
- Rejection
- Restlessness

### **Physical Signs Possibly Related to Stress**

- Back Pain
- Diarrhea
- Dizziness
- Dry Mouth
- Sweating
- Exhaustion
- Fainting
- Headaches
- Heartburn
- Insomnia
- Nausea
- No Appetite
- Skin Rashes
- Sweating
- Shakiness
- Tension

Stress has a powerful affect on a person's thoughts, feelings, physical health, behavior, and overall functioning. Symptoms often include anxiety, back pain, diarrhea, depression, fatigue, frustration, headaches, insomnia, impatience, irritability, skin rashes, sweating, and tension. It is important to realize that everyone experiences stress differently.

The causes of stress vary from person to person. A survey taken by the Health Works web site ([www.all-stressedup.com](http://www.all-stressedup.com)) found that the top ten most stressful events were: conflicts with loved ones, money problems, pace of modern life, working/raising a family, excessive noise, crime in the community, violence on TV & movies, health problems, commuting, and computers.



# Treatments for Stress Management

Perhaps the best way to identify whether or not you're suffering from stress is to ask yourself if your stress is in any way negatively affecting your enjoyment of life. If the answer is yes, you may want to explore treatment options.

Treatment for stress management can be complicated and confusing because there are different types of stress - each with its own characteristics, symptoms, duration, and treatment approaches. Licensed, qualified behavioral health professionals can help people address the causes of their stress and teach them effective ways to deal with those causes. It is recommended that before the treatment process begins a person should have a complete physical examination and a medical history review to rule out any other possible causes for their symptoms being experienced.

While they don't help you discover the origins of your stress, there are many other ways to help you achieve stress relief. Practices like exercise, meditation, deep breathing, aromatherapy, progressive muscle relaxation, and yoga have all proven to be effective stress-busters. Keep in mind that your diet can also have an impact on the way you feel.



## 10 Proven Stress Reducers

1. **GET UP 15 MINUTES EARLIER IN THE MORNING.** Morning mishaps, if they happen, will be less stressful.
2. **DON'T RELY ON YOUR MEMORY.** Write down the things you need to remember, such as names, times, lists, etc...
3. **DON'T PROCRASTINATE.** It builds up stress. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today. Whatever you want to do today, do it now.
4. **PLAN AHEAD.** Keep your gas tank above 1/4 full, don't wait to buy more stamps, paper towels, food, etc...
5. **BE PREPARED TO WAIT.** A paperback novel can make the wait in a post office or supermarket line almost bearable.
6. **CREATE ORDER OUT OF CHAOS.** Organize your home and workplace and always put things where they belong.
7. **TURN NEEDS INTO PREFERENCES.** The only things we **NEED** are air, food, water, and shelter. Everything else is preference.
8. **DO ONE THING AT A TIME.** Concentrate on what you're doing and whom you are with right now. Forget about everything else.
9. **ELIMINATE DESTRUCTIVE SELF-TALK.** You're never "too old," too fat," or "too anything" to accomplish your goals.
10. **BECOME MORE FLEXIBLE.** Not everything has to be perfect. The stress you avoid by compromising may be well worth it.

If you have identified with the issues discussed in this flyer and you're ready to take the next step toward feeling better, visit our web site or call Portage Path and find out how we can help:

<b>Web Site</b>	<a href="http://www.portagepath.org">www.portagepath.org</a>
<b>Appointments</b>	330-253-3100 800-828-4508

If you feel you're in emotional crisis and you need someone to talk to, call our free 24-hour, 7-day crisis hotline:

<b>Support Hotline</b>	330-434-9144 888-434-8878
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state-of-the-art care for your state of mind.