

Feeling A Little Stressed?



We've all had stress – brief of persistent, situational like being in traffic or complex like too much work and too little time.

Short and long-term stress effects include abdominal pain, acne, increased heart rate, and anger.

People who successfully handle stress understand that coping skills and strategies are like workshop tools. It's important to use the right one. For example, avoiding a stressful situation altogether (the "saw") might be a good choice. But skipping the annual family dinner because your brother-in-law's inappropriate remarks make your blood boil may increase your stress level because you're missing an important event you would rather enjoy! The problem may require a "ruler" instead—measure and trim your reaction to the annoying behavior.

Let's take a look at three groups of stress-coping¹ "tools" that psychologists say can help you combat stress. That includes holiday stress!

Problem-focused

These skills involve finding ways to reduce or eliminate the stressor entirely. For example, to avoid the awful commute traffic, you decide to start your morning commute 15 minutes early.

Problem-focused skills can range from the subtle, such as a distraction from a stressful event (take a walk for a break from a stressful family get-together), to the extreme: its complete elimination (choose not to attend). Think of these skills as the difference between a tack hammer and a sledgehammer. Sometimes one works better than the other.

Appraisal-focused

These skills, like a "file," help you change the way you think about a stressful event by smoothing and reshaping its edges. They help you challenge assumptions and lead you to see problems, issues, or experiences in a different light. This could mean looking on the bright side, seeing the humor in a situation, or deciding it is okay not to have two types of cranberry sauce this year!

Making a pros-versus-cons list to weigh the importance of an activity versus the effects of avoiding it entirely is an example of the appraisal approach to stress management. You may realize that suffering your brother-in-law's annoying presence is far outweighed by seeing your cousins and enjoying a family event.

What you can do

- Monitor your moods – when faced with stress, write down what caused it and your thoughts
- Make time for yourself 2 to 3 times a week – Turn off the phone, meditate, take 10 minutes a day personal time
- Walk away when angry – before reacting count to 10, walk and readdress situation
- Analyze your schedule – Assess priorities and learn to delegate or eliminate unnecessary tasks

What your MAP can do

- Your MAP can help you create a game plan to anticipate and manage your stress.
- They will work with you to determine the triggers of our stress.
- MAPs help you develop coping strategies when faced with stress and stressful situations.
- Your MAP will help you create a blue print for conflict resolution.
- For more information, contact you MAP at: 800-633-3353 or 704-529-1428

Contact McLaughlin Young MAP at 800-633-3353 or 704-529-1428

This information is not intended to replace the medical advice of your doctor or healthcare provider.

Adapted from Psychology Applied to Modern Life: Adjustment in the 21st Century Wayne Weiten and Dana S. Dunn