



# Stress stamina: Your key to resilience

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Experiencing stress in life is the norm, not the exception. The key to managing it is to develop “stress stamina”—the ability to endure stressors, bounce back and realize that you can learn and grow from every situation.<sup>1</sup>

Improving your stress stamina can help you manage and even thrive while taking chances and handling other pressures in your life.

## Steps to resiliency

**1. Recover.** After a stressful event, you need to get your sense of balance and routine back. To begin healing, take a break.

Plan a short getaway or just make time to “chill out” at home. Even mini-breaks like going to the movies can help you gain perspective. Other good stress reducers include exercise and sharing with others.

**2. Refocus.** Try to step back and see “the big picture.” Take time to think about what’s happened, why and what it may mean. Work on finding the positive side of change.

You might have mixed feelings. For example, if you’ve been promoted to a leadership role, you might be happy and also nervous about managing a staff.

You may feel sad or angry about having to let go of people and routines you know. All these feelings are valid. Work on identifying — and accepting — all your reactions.

**3. Regenerate.** Your body needs time to mend after stress. Give yourself permission to rest. Eat regularly. Have some fun and get support by connecting with new people or old friends.

## Stress: It’s an old (ancient!) story

Stress is a response your body gives to any demand made upon it.

Your body responds in many ways. Hormones such as adrenalin surge. Your heartbeat and blood pressure increase. Your blood sugar rises.

These effects — unchanged for thousands of years — helped our cave-dwelling relatives survive. This “fight-or-flight” response helped them run away faster or fight harder against the dangers (or stressors) of their daily lives.<sup>2</sup>

## Modern-day stress: both positive and negative

Today we may not need to hunt or fight for food and shelter. But we still have stress. Some stressors are negative like traffic jams, difficult jobs or the breakup of relationships.

Stressors can also be positive. Think of events like having a baby, winning the lottery or completing a project. These are happy events, yet they can still cause stress.

## The long-term effects of stress

Your body reacts the same way to positive and negative stressors. And chronic stress can be harmful. You may feel tired, depressed or anxious. You may have physical symptoms such as head-, stomach- or backaches.

## Use stress to your advantage

Stress is like body temperature: If it’s too low or too high for a long time, it can threaten your wellbeing. But the right balance can keep you strong. You can use stress energy to meet life’s challenges, experiences and goals.

You can’t escape stress, but you can build stress stamina by taking good care of yourself. That way, you’ll be better able to accept and master the challenges in your life.

<sup>1</sup><http://dictionary.reference.com>

<sup>2</sup><http://psychology.about.com>