

Staying Well in Hard Times

Web Resources:

- American Psychological Association:
www.apa.org/topics/topicstress.html

- National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine:
http://nccam.nih.gov/news/upcomingmeetings/abstracts_mt/stress.htm

- Workplace Solutions Self-Assessment Tools:
http://wseap.com/site_emp_solutions/self_assessment_tools.php

Managing stress during tough economic times is vitally important to our health and well-being. When faced with a crisis, it's best to separate 1) that which we have control over from 2) those things we can't change. Focus energy on the things you *can* control, and, in doing so, reduce your stress reaction. *Here are some tips:*

1. **Remember that recessions are a natural part of the economic cycle.** Keep a long-term perspective; the current financial issues will work themselves out over time.
2. **Monitor information consumption.** Constant checking can increase stress. Control the amount of information by choosing one or two trusted resources to keep yourself updated.
3. **Act on facts, not fear.** Assess your saving and retirement situation, and take advantage of online assessment tools offered by the institutions that manage your money. If you have a financial planner, plan a meeting to gain perspective. Get professional advice to help you manage your budget and adjust financial goals.
4. **Think about holiday spending.** Talk with your significant other, family and friends. Does it make sense to cut back on gift exchanges this year? Would donations in your name give you more pleasure than an actual gift?
5. **Maintain routines.** When a crisis occurs, daily routines provide comfort and consistency when events feel out of control, especially for children. Do your best to maintain a schedule.
6. **Play.** Laughter is the best medicine. It can lower blood pressure, relax muscles, elevate mood and improve brain functioning, and it reduces stress hormones. Go ahead and play - because it's good for you.
7. **Eat well.** Include your favorites in moderation. Food provides energy for body and soul. Make sure to include vegetables, fruit and protein daily.
8. **Be social.** Regular contact with family, friends and coworkers can increase a sense of belonging, increase self-worth and feelings of security, and help keep a sense of purpose and hope alive. Don't wait for a call, reach out yourself.
9. **Reassure your children.** No matter what happens, you are in this together as a family. Listen to their concerns, and reassure them, again and again if need be. Take their suggestions seriously and let them help in the ways that they are able.

The current state of the economy can mean increased levels of stress for many, and we may be putting extra focus on our individual financial situations. It's important to also be mindful of our reactions to the events around us, and how our reactions impact our stress levels.

During times such as this, stress hormones are produced in the body in an age-old attempt to prepare us to deal with danger. An increase in blood sugar, heart rate and blood pressure prepares muscles to undergo physical battle, or to flee. This response may be helpful in the short run, yet if left unchecked, the "fight or flight" response may cause chronic disease in the long term.

**Contact Workplace Solutions today for free, confidential assistance.
Professional counselors are available 24/7 by calling 800-327-5071.**

A variety of educational and supportive resources are available online at www.wseap.com.