

Managing stress with mindfulness

By Amy Smith

“I’m so stressed out!”

Likely, someone has said this to you –or you’ve said it yourself.

These days the word “stress” has a negative connotation. But what if it isn’t the actual stress that’s harmful, but how it’s perceived?



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Your reaction to stress matters

Research published in “Health Psychology: has shown that there’s a higher risk for premature death in those who perceive stress as negative, including those with only a minimal amount of stress. However, study participants who experienced a high level of stress, but didn’t perceive it as harmful, had a lower risk for premature death. These findings suggest that having a positive mindset about stress may help develop resilience.

Avoiding stress may seem like a rational strategy, but this often leads to feelings of discontent. When you seek a stress-free life, you may develop feelings of inadequacy, loneliness, and depression because being stress-free is an unrealistic

goal.

Turn to your life values

Generally, daily stressors are conflicts with our life values. Life values give us a foundation and sense of purpose. So in order to rethink your stress mindset, it helps to understand which values matter most to you. Take a look at the box at

right.

Review the life values Review the life values listed below. Choose a few that connect with you most.

Accountability
Athleticism
Authenticity
Citizenship
Commitment
Compassion
Creativity
Curiosity
Environment
Equality
Family
Generosity
Healing
Health
Honesty
Honor
Humor
Inclusivity
Independence
Integrity
Joy
Justice
Kindness
Knowledge
Leadership
Loyalty
Movement
Relationships
Reliability
Resourcefulness
Strength
Success
Teamwork
Tradition
Trust
Vitality
Wisdom

Now take a few moments to reflect and write down why each of these values is important to you. How do you express this value in your everyday life? How do these values support you in being true to yourself?

Recall a past experience in which you overcame a stressful event or task. What value or part of you made that possible? Research illustrates that reflecting on your values in moments of stress can help reframe a negative, reactive mindset to a positive, reflective response.

Becoming mindful of your values

To develop daily mindfulness around your values, write them down on sticky notes and place them in visible areas, such as your home, car, and workstation. When you notice stressors in your life, looking at your sticky note will help you mindfully reframe your reaction. This can help you “rise to the challenge” and face stressful situations with reason, logic, compassion, and self-control.

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