

# 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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