***COPING* WITH STRESS WHEN IT HAS ALREADY ARRIVED**

Consider thinking of your life as like a bucket. You fill it up with activities (positive and negative) and at some point you reach capacity---your bucket is full. There’s no way to add anything else without the bucket overflowing. So, when life demands that you add one more thing to the bucket, you can feel really overwhelmed---or in other words *stressed*---and it can be difficult to keep things from spilling out.

So, what typically gets tossed out of your bucket when life demands more? For most people, taking care of themselves and their needs is the first thing that goes.

However, when you are stressed, it is precisely the time to give yourself a little attention, be kind to yourself, and give yourself a break, even if it is in small ways. So, how can you give back to yourself when your bucket is overflowing or is about to overflow? Below you will find a list of basic tools to help you cope more effectively with stress when it comes up.

**MAKING SPACE TO TAKE CARE OF YOU**

* **Take a break for YOURSELF**. Sometimes just taking a moment to step out of the situation, breathe, and relax can help you to calm down and be able to go back to a challenging situation with a fresh perspective.
* Move those muscles. Get out and take a walk or do some other form of physical activity. By moving your muscles you can activate your body’s own natural endorphins which can boost your mood. Remember, this doesn’t have to be long---start with 5 or 10 minutes. You may find that once you get moving you will want to keep going for longer. But even if you don’t, that’s ok too!
* **Take care of *you*--do something that is soothing.** Sometimes people listen to music, read a book, draw or color, take a hot bath or shower, sip some tea, or get a massage. Think about what makes you feel more relaxed and make some time to do that, even if it for only 10 to 15 minutes. Sometimes all you need is a little break!
* **Reboot your sleep routine.** Sleep has a big impact on mood. Check out our sleep hygiene tips and join the #SleepRevolution
* **Make time to eat.** Pack snacks and schedule meals just like you schedule other activities. Refuel — you can’t run on fumes!
* **Try relaxation techniques**. People who regularly stretch, practice progressive muscle relaxation, do deep breathing exercises and/or engage in other mindfulness techniques have shown reduced physical symptoms and psychological distress, enhanced daily functioning, increased well-being, and increased quality of life. Check out online resources to guide you through these exercises. For example:

[**http://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/#**](http://self-compassion.org/category/exercises/)

[**http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22**](http://marc.ucla.edu/body.cfm?id=22)

[**https://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/relax/downloads.html**](https://www.dartmouth.edu/~healthed/relax/downloads.html)

[**http://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/programs/mbsr/Pages/audio.aspx**](http://health.ucsd.edu/specialties/mindfulness/programs/mbsr/Pages/audio.aspx)

* **Consider talking with family, friends, or important others (e.g., clergy).** We all need to support of others when stressors hit. Close others become “pillows” to fall back on---a place where you can find comfort and support as well as practical help to cope with your stressors. Think about who you will turn to for support and set up some time by phone or in person to talk.

**ROADMAP FOR STRESS REDUCTION**

**What are the activities or events that are causing you the most stress right now?**

1. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
2. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
3. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
4. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
5. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**What are some of the signals (physical & psychological) that tell you that you are stressed?**

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2. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
3. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
4. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
5. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**What are your main strategies for coping stress?**

1. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
2. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
3. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
4. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
5. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**What tools do you want to add to your toolbox?**

1. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
2. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**
3. **\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**