



We all experience stress at one time or another. Stress is a normal reaction to any type of change. It affects our bodies, emotions, thoughts and behaviors. The effects of stress can be positive, negative, or a combination of the two.

Signs and Symptoms of Stress

The following are common signs and symptoms of stress. Identify those that you are experiencing now or have experienced in the past.

- fatigue
- anxiety, apprehensiveness, guilt
- headaches or dizziness
- sadness or depression
- rapid heart beat
- loss of interest in people and things
- stomach aches or nausea
- mood swings
- teeth grinding
- trouble concentrating
- loneliness
- confusion and forgetfulness
- helplessness
- increased aggression
- dread of going to work
- changes in eating or sleeping habits
- getting easily overwhelmed, frustrated, upset, or angry
- feeling pressures or pressed for time
- feeling incompetent, inadequate, unappreciated, or trapped
- increased use of alcohol, drugs, or cigarettes
- thinking of the same thing over and over again

If you have several of these symptoms and they linger or keep recurring, it may be a sign that stress is affecting you negatively. Get to know your own reaction to stress so you can notice it early and work to reduce it before it gets worse.

Stress in the Office

Common causes of stress in the office:

Job demands

- unrealistic or unclear expectations
- too much to do or too little time to complete assignments
- lack of challenge or job burn-out
- lack of input on how you do your job
- difficulty juggling work and family responsibilities

Job security

- performance evaluation, raise, or salary cut
- financial cutbacks, reorganizations, hiring freezes, and lay-offs
- change in job responsibilities or classification

Relations with your supervisor and co-workers

- poor communication or conflicts among staff
- inadequate support
- favoritism, differential treatment, or insensitivity
- loss of staff or staff turnover

You may be able to change some of the above; others are not under your control. On the back are tips on developing a stress reduction plan.



Stress-Reducing Strategies

Here are some ways you might take action to change or handle situations that are causing you stress in your office environment.

- Identify the cause(s) of your stress. Figure out if there is anything you can do to change the situation. Is it in your control to change any or all of it?
- Don't try to make too many changes or accomplish too much at once. Make a list of priorities. Break things down into manageable pieces. Set limits.
- Participate actively in staff meetings. Ask questions and make suggestions that may help the office run more smoothly. Try to communicate clearly and treat others respectfully. Share your ideas and take responsibility for group decisions.
- Make sure you understand your job tasks and performance standards. Consult with your supervisor about possible solutions to workload difficulties. Enroll in a skills training class to make your job easier for you.
- Assess whether your job is a good match for your skills and values. Investigate career development resources available on campus. Consider an alternative work schedule for more time with your family or to return to school.
- Take a workshop on communication, conflict resolution, and/or stress management skills to increase your personal and interpersonal effectiveness in stressful situations.

Coping Techniques

Sometimes you may not be able to change the situation that is causing your stress. Here are some ways you might try coping with stress in situations beyond your control until the situation changes.

- Get support. Identify co-workers, friends, and family you trust and can talk to. Make social plans with them. Join departmental or campus-wide social activities and staff organizations to meet new friends and build social support among others on campus with common interests.
- Practice deep breathing, visualization, meditation, yoga, stretching or some other techniques that helps you relax. When you are feeling more relaxed you will have an easier time finding concrete solutions to your problems.
- Take a break from whatever is causing your stress. Don't forget to laugh, play, and have fun.
- Take care of yourself. Maintain a healthy diet. Exercise moderately at least two to three times a week. Get enough sleep. Remember that caffeine, alcohol, cigarettes and drugs do not help solve your problems and actually contribute to stress.
- Take brief wellness breaks by walking on campus with a friend. The change of scenery and social support can make a difference!

Campus Resources

- Be Well at Work – Employee Assistance at 643-7754.
 - Free, confidential problem assessment, referral and consultation
 - Stress management workshops and educational materials on stress
- Staff Ombuds Office at 642-7823 - free consultation and workshops on conflict resolution
- Free Berkeley Walks Walking Group meets every MWF at 12:10 at the south side of the Campanile.
- Workfit - onsite exercise classes offered by Rec Sports for employees. [Recsports.berkeley.edu/workfit](https://recsports.berkeley.edu/workfit)

