

# Stress



**Stress is what you feel when you react to pressure. Pressure can come from things like work, family, money, illness, or the way you feel about yourself.**

**Everyone handles stress differently.**

## The Stress Response

The **Stress Response** is your body's way of helping you meet challenges and react under pressure. It works by releasing chemicals into your body that are normally helpful.

However, if it continues for a long time, it can affect your physical health and wellbeing in negative ways.

## Signs Your Stress Response is Overworking

### Changes in Feelings

- Feeling sad, edgy, irritable, anxious, or panicked much of the time.
- Blaming other people for bad things that happen to you.
- Only seeing the down side of situations.
- Feeling like things that you used to enjoy aren't fun now.

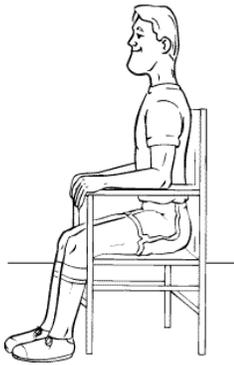
### Changes in the Body

- Dry mouth or skin problems.
- Loss of appetite or eating constantly.
- Headaches, stomachaches, diarrhea or constipation.
- Trouble sleeping.

## How to Lower Your Stress Level

- **Don't over schedule yourself**- make time for things you love.
- **Make a list of what is important**- work on them one by one.
- **Have healthy habits**- exercise, eat well, and sleep.
- **Relax**- calm and unwind everyday. Try one of the activities listed on the other side.

# Relaxation Activities



## Breathing Exercise

- Sit upright.
- Support your arms on a side chair or on your lap.
- Inhale slowly through your nose and into your belly for 4 seconds.
- Hold this breath for 1-2 seconds.
- Exhale slowly through your nose for 4 seconds.
- Pause before taking another breath.
- Try this exercise several times daily. It takes practice.

## Muscle Relaxation Exercise

- Start at your feet and work your way up to your head.
- Take a deep breath, tighten and hold each muscle for 5 seconds.
- Then release the tension while breathing out.
- Repeat with each body part as you move up the body.

