Stress is a normal psychological and physical reaction to the ever-increasing demands of life; however, there are both positive and negative stressors. Learning to identify and manage your stress can help you to cope with life’s daily challenges.

The Three Steps of Stress Management

1. Determine the current stressors within your life
2. Identify ways to reduce the stressors
3. Make changes and prioritize your life accordingly

Identify Your Stressors

The most important phase of stress management is identifying your personal triggers. Take time to write down and/or discuss your various life stressors with someone.

Stress Reducers

The following is a list of proven stress reducers; pick a few to decide which works best for you.

- **Sleep**: Getting 7-9 hours of sleep each night is crucial in maintaining your body’s overall health and wellness.
- **Learn to say no**: You don’t have to say yes to everything. If it doesn’t help you achieve your goals, it really is all right to say no.
- **Exercise**: This not only releases chemicals that help you to feel happy, but it helps to break down the chemicals that raise your stress levels. A regular exercise schedule can help regulate naturally-occurring hormones.
- **Laughing**: This has been shown to release chemicals and reduce stress hormones in your brain. Read a good comic or watch a funny movie or video clip.
- **Journal**: Keeping a gratitude journal or journaling about life has been shown to help boost optimism and can help to take burdens from your shoulders.
- **Do something you enjoy**: Take 5 minutes for “me time.” This allows for a few minutes to unwind. Try taking up a new hobby, playing music, or painting nails.
- **Spend time with others**: Although it may seem daunting at first, getting out and socializing can help reduce risk factors for stress.
- **Other**: Do anything else that is relaxing for you personally.

Make Changes

In order to manage stress, you need to make changes to cope with life’s challenges. Create and stick to a schedule. To start, prioritize those things of most importance and then add in stress reducers. Eliminate unnecessary stressors. Finally, make appropriate lifestyle changes for healthier living.

Reviewed and approved by Doctor Bradbury, September 2012