

## Emotional Wellness

Emotional wellness is being able to look forward to the future and feel good about you. Also, when you are under stress or you are having a bad day, it is about being able to recover and deal with the issues straight on by using all your coping skills. It is the ability to take charge of your life and own your actions. You feel emotions, have relationships and learn and grow as a person.

## How to Manage Negative Thoughts

Sometimes when you are stressed, you may think you have little control of how things will turn out. When you are in control of your thoughts, your stress will be more manageable. To get this sense of having control in your life, it is a good idea to get all the support and help you need as you move forward. Also sometimes just changing the way we think of setbacks in our life can help us get organized and stop the negative thoughts and break the negative thinking.

Write some of your fears about your abilities on the left hand side of this paper. List your thoughts as short sentences. Then on the right hand side of this paper, write the same thoughts in a more positive way. There are two examples for you to follow.

You will find that it is easy to believe either list but the positive statements said out loud will be much more encouraging.

Negative Way to Think	Positive Way to Think
I have never done it before	I am going to try and ask for help if I need it
I can't do it very well	I can try to do it and I will make progress

This Tip sheet was adapted from the Eli Lilly and Company Team Solutions -Workbook 6

## How to Reduce Stress

Stress is a normal reaction to demands made upon the body, but stress is not always easy to recognize. For example, stress is often the feeling of tension or pressure we have when we are making a change. We may be embarrassed or afraid when we don't know if we can do something. Stress can feel like many emotions or physical feelings.

Many people have been told to avoid stressful situations because stress can cause symptoms to get worse. Although it is true that stress can affect symptoms, no one can avoid stress. Everyone has some amount of stress every day because stress is normal part of life.

Our bodies often show signs of stress that tell us something needs to be changed or handled differently. It can be easy to miss these signs. The signs can be different from one person to the next. What we have in common is that stress often makes us uncomfortable in some way.

**Below is a list of common signs of stress.**

### **Physical signs:**

- Headache
- Poor concentration
- Upset stomach
- Tight or tense muscles
- Heartburn
- Diarrhea, constipation, or going to the bathroom more often.

- Changes in heart beat, breathing and blood pressure
- Jaw pain
- Tiredness

**Mood Signs:**

- Irritability
- Anger
- Depressed-loss of hope
- Anxiety
- Feeling very excited and tense

**Behavioral Signs:**

- Trouble sleeping (either too much or too little)
- Eating too much or too little
- Smoking more
- Having difficulty making a decision
- Using or abusing drugs or alcohol
- Staying away from others
- Worrying about the same thing over and over

**List other signs of stress you have noticed** \_\_\_\_\_

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This is a breathing exercise that may help you lower your stress level and help you see the world differently.

## Deep Breathing Exercise

1. **Get comfortable.** If possible, lie down on your back on a blanket or rug placed on the floor. Bend our knees and move your feet about 8 inches apart, with your toes turned slightly outward. Make sure your spine is straight. If sitting, sit straight in chair with your arms relaxed at your side. Your hands can rest in your lap. Have your head centered and balanced so you do not cause any strain on your neck muscles.
2. **Check tension.** Check your body for any tension.
3. **Place hands.** Place one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest.
4. **Inhale through your nose.** Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. You may count to four while you inhale. Inhale into your stomach to push up your hand as much as is comfortable. Your chest should move only a little and only when your stomach does.
5. **Hold.** Hold your breath for a count of two.
6. **Exhale through your mouth.** When you are at ease with step 4 smile slightly and exhale through your mouth, making a quiet, relaxing whooshing sound like the wind as you blow gently out. Your mouth, tongue, and jaw will be relaxed. You may count to four as you exhale slowly, and your stomach is gradually lowered. Focus on the sound and the breathing as you become more relaxed.
7. **Repeat.** Keep deep breathing for 5-10 minutes at a time. Do this twice a day.
8. **Recheck Tension.** At the end of each session, check for tension levels. Are you less tense than you were before you began?

**Remember, mastering this relaxation skill will take time. Do not be concerned if the first session did not relieve all your stress. As you keep practicing, your body will learn and you can have increased periods of stress relief.**

**Relaxation Tip: Practice deep breathing twice a day to reduce your overall stress.**

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## MANAGING YOUR ANGER

What is anger? Anger is a natural and normal emotion. Its impact can range from our being mildly irritated to having an intense anger that can explode in a rage. To reach a healthy emotional balance, we need to learn to manage and express our anger in healthy ways. Much like stress, anger can be good or bad for us. It all depends on how and when we choose to express it.

### Positive steps to handling your anger

**Step #1: Recognize when you are becoming angry.** Sometimes anger is a response to several difficult events that have built up over time. By recognizing when anger is building up inside you will be better able to recognize that you need to do something to relieve the stress.

### Progressive states of anger:

1. Irritation is when small things bother you.
2. Frustration is when small things bother you, and your efforts to solve them do not work.
3. Anger is the feeling of wanting to lose control as an emotional expression.
4. Rage is losing control and the ability to reason and think clearly stops.
5. Aggression is the continued expression of anger in a destructive way.



**Step #2: Stop your first response.** When you get mad, it is good to stop and think before taking action. Taking action right away can make a situation worse and may get you into trouble. This is why the old method of counting to 10 before doing anything can actually help. It stops that initial angry reaction, allowing you to take a deep breath and think about what you want to do next.

**Step #3: Identify where your anger comes from.** It can be easy to think that anger is a result of other people's actions. If you do that, you will tend to blame other people for causing your emotions. However, your feelings, including anger, are actually under your control.

**Step #4: Reevaluate the situation.** Once you realize your emotions are within your control, you are able to make some changes in how you manage your anger. When you understand what triggers your anger, you have a new ability to manage your anger.

**Step #5: Choosing what to do.** The final step includes taking care of you. By using relaxation and calming techniques to balance your feelings, you can always go back and take action when you have had a chance to think it through.



**Talking to someone about how they see the situation can also help.**

## **Practicing Anger Management**

Now you have new skills to use when your anger is building. Use the basic steps outlined above and practice, practice and practice. Don't worry if it doesn't work at first. Sometimes you have to learn a new skill over a period of time.

1. Calming your emotions
2. Looking at the situation from a different viewpoint (maybe asking someone you trust to help you)
3. Choosing the best action to take

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## The Benefits of Pets

Today, owning a pet is more popular than ever. About two thirds of the U. S. house hold now own at least one pet. There is a general belief that owning a pet benefits humans emotionally and physically. Many therapists who see their patients interact with an animal claim they see an improved mood and reduced anxiety. Pet owners also seem to respond to stress better and recover quicker. To humans, pets can provide love and attention and decreases loneliness.

Many studies on physical reactions noted the benefits of owning a pet such as lower heart rate and blood pressure. Just petting and touching the pet seems to have a calming effect or just maintaining your attention on a fish or animal playing can have a soothing effect. Several studies have also shown dog owners may get more exercise which means dog owners are less likely to be obese than those who didn't own or walk a dog. In one study, older dog walkers were noted to walk faster and had better mobility inside their homes than non-dog walkers their age.

Walking a pet can also lead to more conversations with others and can open an opportunity to build social relationships. This is important because studies have clearly shown that people who have more friends tend to live longer and are less likely to show mental and physical declines as they age.

It does not matter what the pet is to get the emotional and physical benefits. It could be a dog, a cat, a ferret, a rabbit, a parakeet, a gold fish or anything else. The only thing that matters is that the animal interests you and that you can physically care for the animal.

If you are considering a pet, you need to consider your living space and the lifestyle you live before you adopt. You may want to discuss pet ownership with someone that owns a pet first to discuss the pros and cons of ownership.

This Tip was in part adapted from the National Institute of Health Newsletter at this link  
<http://newsinhealth.nih.gov/2009/February/feature1.htm>