



Tips for handling stress when times get tough

During difficult times, stress and panic can overcome us. Here are some steps you can take to retain your sanity:

- Maintain as normal a schedule as possible, but don't overdo it; cut out unnecessary "busyness" and don't take on new projects.
- Allow time for activities that make you happy.
- Acknowledge that you may be operating below your normal level for a while.
- Structure your time even more carefully than usual – it's normal to forget things when you're under stress.
- Keep lists and double-check any important work.
- Maintain control where you can – make small decisions even if you feel like the issue is unimportant, or you don't care (it is important to maintain control in some areas of your life).
- Spend time with others, even though it may be difficult at first – it's easy to withdraw when you're hurt, but now you need the company of others.
- Establish support systems: family, friends, places of worship, school, coworkers, etc.
- Be aware that children are often unable to express their thoughts or feelings verbally; often they will act them out.
- Let your children know that you are there to listen if they want to talk – be honest with them about your own thoughts and feelings.
- Avoid self-prescribed medication and addictive substances like drugs, alcohol, caffeine, and nicotine – controlled substances may reduce the perception of stress, but they do not minimize anxiety.
- Find help; if you feel as though you are alone and no one can help, don't let your feelings of panic, anger, and loneliness build.
- Recognize and deal with your stress – counseling or a support group can help.
- Give yourself time – you may feel better for a while, then have a "relapse." This is normal; allow plenty of time to adjust to the new realities you must face.

Content provided by the FEI Behavioral Health Employee Assistance and Crisis Management Programs' "The Critical Incident Response".