

MANAGE STRESS WITH SELF-AWARENESS

Stress is the body and mind's response to people, places and events. You've probably felt the symptoms of negative stress: anxiety, a pounding heart, headaches, fatigue and muscle tension. Long-term chronic stress can lead to health issues such as heart disease, high blood pressure, depression, lowered immunity as well as impacting your weight. For many people, the body and mind symptoms of stress can trigger us to over eat.

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Body Signals

- Increased breathing rate
- Increased heart rate
- Headaches
- Neck aches
- Back aches
- Upset stomach
- Increased perspiration
- Insomnia

Mind Signals

- Fear
- Resentment
- Confusion
- Irritability
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Anger
- Negativity

Stress and weight

Chronic long-term stress can have an impact on your weight. It can cause higher than normal levels of the hormone cortisol in your body which, amongst other health problems, can lead to weight gain. The good news is through a combination of life-balancing activities and physical activity you can help to manage this and reverse the effects.

Mastering stress management

1. Note your body and mind stress signals

Learn how you react to stressful occasions. Start by listening to your body and looking out for the physical and emotional symptoms. Where do you sense your stress and how does it feel? What emotions do you experience when you are stressed?

2. Breathe away stress

One simple way to manage stress is through breathing. Think of your breathing as a way to centre yourself and quiet your mind. As practise, try the following:

- > Inhale deeply, filling your abdomen with air
- > Hold that breath for a few seconds
- > Slowly exhale, first from the abdomen, and then up through the chest
- > Repeat 5-10 times

3. Walk your way to well being

Physical activity can be one of the most powerful ways to reduce stress and restore balance. Next time you walk, make it a relaxing experience. Focus on your breathing. Be conscious of your posture. Feel your stride. See how awareness can relax your body and rejuvenate your spirit.

4. Strengthen and stretch your way to well being

Stretching and toning activities, performed mindfully, can also energise and calm you. Speak to your Consultant about the Jenny Craig tools to help bring mind-body balance to your day. You could also investigate activities such as yoga which can be very effective for stress management.

5. Build resilience with the things that matter most

Think of the things that are life enriching, the activities that energise and fulfill you. When life gets hectic, it's easy to give up those things and go into 'survival' mode until the storm passes. This can leave you feeling drained and deprived. A better way is to hold them closer than ever as sources of strength to weather the storm. Think about what matters to you? For example, playing with the children, relaxing with your partner, spouse or friend, travelling or going to a movie, play or concert.

There are many different stress management techniques and they are quite individual as to what works for different people.

Think about some techniques that you would like to try to combat your stress:

If stress is a major issue for you, be sure to discuss this with your doctor as well.