



## Understanding Stress and Its Impact



**Stress is a natural part of life, and everyone experiences it in different ways. Whether it builds gradually or appears suddenly, unmanaged stress can affect both your physical and mental well-being. Events like political unrest, natural disasters, or community violence can trigger emotional responses—fear, sadness, anxiety—not just in you, but in those around you. While these feelings are normal, they should be temporary. Recognizing the signs of stress early on can help you take action and stay balanced.**

### Common Signs of Stress

- Shock or disbelief
- Increased tension and irritability
- Anxiety about the future
- Difficulty making decisions
- Emotional numbness
- Loss of interest in daily activities
- Changes in appetite
- Recurring thoughts or nightmares about a stressful event
- Anger or frustration
- Increased use of alcohol or drugs
- Feelings of sadness or depression
- A sense of powerlessness
- Frequent crying
- Sleep disturbances
- Physical symptoms: headaches, back pain, or stomach issues
- Trouble focusing or concentrating

### Techniques to Reduce Stress Immediately

- **Focus on your breathing:** Take slow, deep breaths to relax your body and mind.
- **Engage in physical activity:** A walk, run, or workout can help release tension.
- **Recognize your limits:** Avoid overcommitting yourself when possible.
- **Take breaks from electronics:** Read a book, listen to music, or take a relaxing bath.
- **Write it out:** Journaling your thoughts and emotions can help you process and manage stress.

- **Choose your battles wisely:** Not every disagreement is worth your time or energy.
- **Practice gratitude:** Remind yourself of the positive aspects of your life to keep perspective.
- **Lean on your support system:** Friends, family, or support groups can provide encouragement when you need it most.

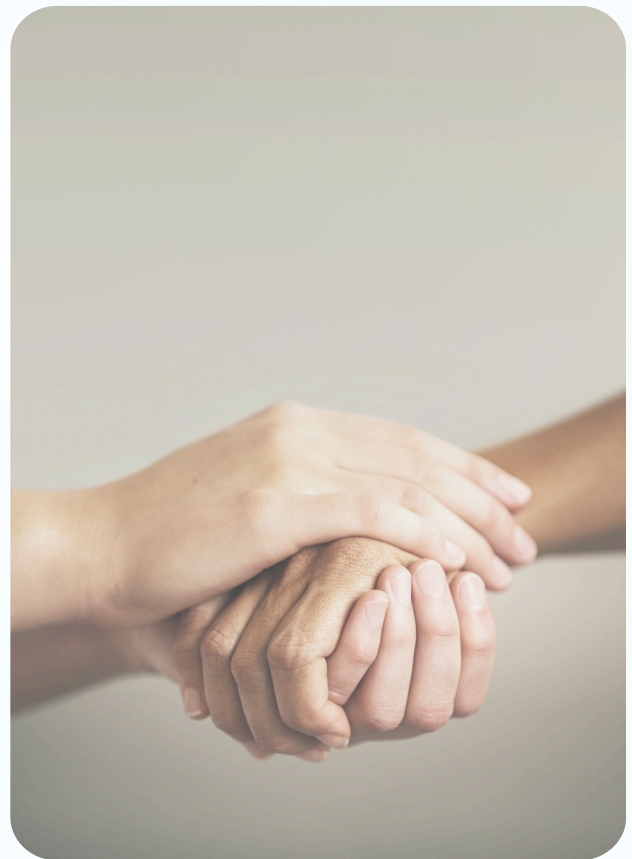
## Practicing Self-Care During Stressful Times

- **Avoid alcohol and drugs:** They may offer temporary relief but often lead to greater stress in the long run.
- **Seek support:** Talk to a trusted friend, family member, counselor, doctor, or spiritual advisor.
- **Stay socially connected:** Avoid isolation by spending time with loved ones or engaging in enjoyable activities.
- **Take care of your body:** By eating well, exercising, getting enough sleep, and doing things that help you relax, like getting a massage.
- **Maintain a routine:** Keeping a consistent daily schedule can provide a sense of stability.
- **Stay engaged:** By helping others—it can lift your mood and give you purpose.

## When to Seek Professional Help

If stress becomes persistent or starts affecting your daily life, professional counseling can help. A mental health professional can offer guidance, strategies, and support to help you regain control.

If you need support, Bree Health offers confidential resources and guidance to help you manage stress and protect your well-being—at no cost to you.



*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*