



How to Manage Stress

Physical Activity

- Exercise—walk your dog. Go dancing. Join a gym. Get at least 20 minutes of activity (preferably the kind that elevates your heart rate), three to five times per week.
- Stretch—stand up. Raise your arms above your head. Stretch to the left and hold it for four seconds. Then stretch to the right and hold for four seconds. Repeat several times.
- Take breaks throughout the day.
- Take time for meals.

Eat and Sleep Well

- Eat healthy. Drink more water. Reduce alcohol, sedatives, caffeine, tobacco products and refined sugars. Increase your intake of whole grains, fruits and vegetables.
- Sleep tight—try to get at least seven to eight hours of sleep every night.

Relationships

- Express yourself—talk to someone who will simply listen, without judging or criticizing. Talking about a problem can help you feel better and provide clarity.
- Communicate clearly about your expectations and expectations others have of you.

If your stress level becomes severe, seek help from a mental health professional who can help determine the best course of treatment for you. Check with your health plan to see what resources are available.

The information in this publication is an educational service to illustrate some practices that may have positive impact on well-being. This general information should not be construed as, does not constitute, and should not be relied upon as medical advice nor legal, counseling, accounting, tax, or other professional advice or services on any specific matter. Remember to consult your Primary Care Provider before starting any exercise program.

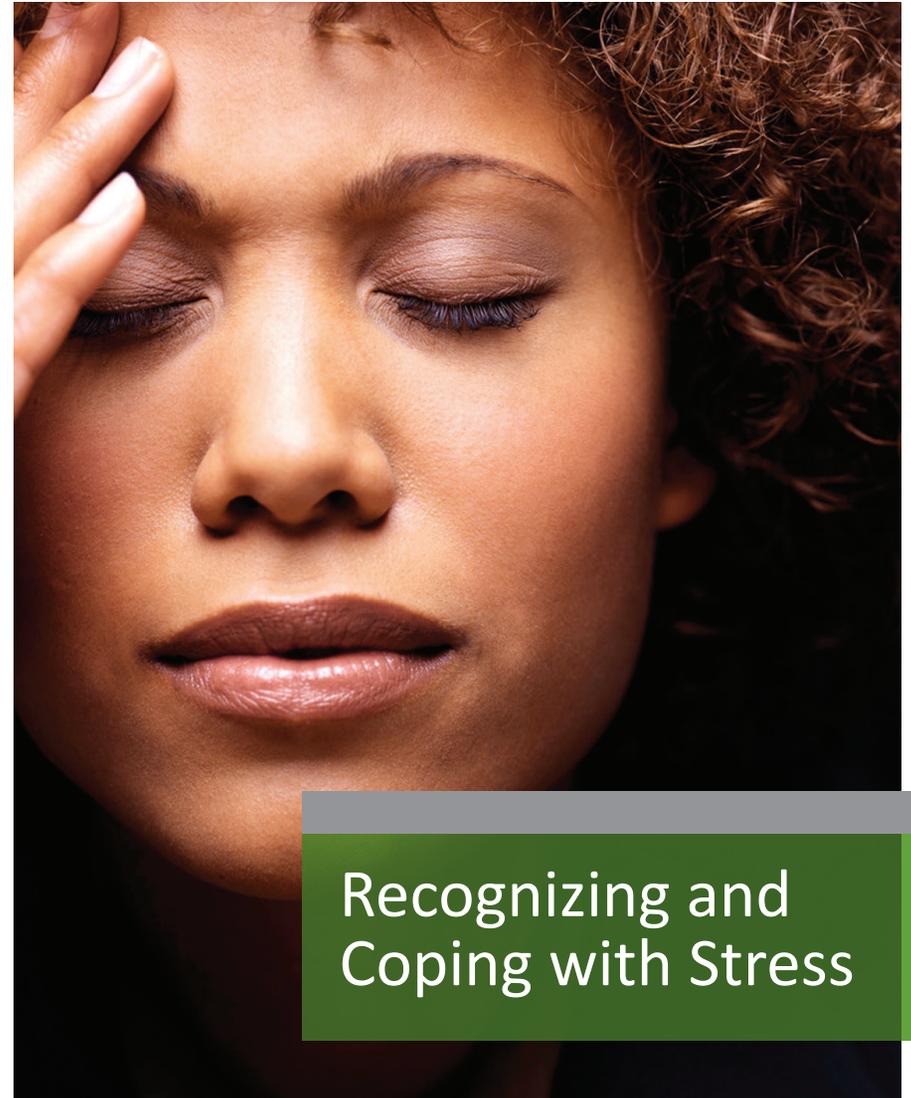
Adapted from www.optum.com



Wespath

BENEFITS | INVESTMENTS

a general agency of The United Methodist Church



Recognizing and Coping with Stress

Stress happens.
It is a natural, physical and psychological response that occurs in both positive and negative situations. Positive stress occurs as a reaction to a problem or desire. Negative stress occurs as a response to a demand or threat. While the short-term reaction provides an energy response, continuous stress can lower the body's ability to cope over time.



Recognizing Stress

- Short-term responses include faster heartbeat, increased sweating, rapid breathing and tense muscles.
- Long-term reactions include digestive problems, fatigue, increased blood pressure or headaches.
- Psychological responses include fear, worry, depression, irritability or despair.

How to Manage Stress

While it's not possible or even desirable to eliminate stress, it can be very useful to learn ways to manage it.

Resiliency

- Focus energy on those things that you can change.
- Think positive—we often have no control over unpleasant events, but we can change the way we think about these events. Avoid the following traps:
 - Catastrophizing (“This is the worst thing that has ever happened to me!”)
 - Generalizing (“My dog doesn’t like me, therefore no one will.”)
 - Projecting (“I’m sure this isn’t going to work out.”)
- Put things in perspective.

Mindfulness

- Practice rest and relaxation—take six deep breaths. Breathe slowly and deeply in through your nose and out through your mouth. Visualize yourself at your favorite place. Use prayer breaths to help you relax.
- Remind yourself that at this moment everything is ok and you can work through the next concern.
- Use a calendar to keep track of deadlines and appointments.
- Use your days off to rest and do things for yourself.

(continued)

