

# Know Your Limits

## TAKE CARE

When you feel the signs and symptoms of stress, slow down and take care of yourself. Allowing stress to go unmanaged can lead to negative consequences both physically and psychologically. It is important to recognize what stress feels like in your body, mind, and soul, and implement some healthy strategies to take care of yourself in a safe and healthy way. It's a 1-2-3 approach!

### 1) Recognize Your Stressors

The first step in managing stress is to identify the triggers or sources of your stress. A trigger is something internal or external that initiates a stress response. For example, seeing a co-worker who reminds you of a stressful job you once had, the sound of a ringtone that reminds you of an ex, or the smell of baked cookies reminding you of your grandmother and the grief you feel as a result of losing her. It could be a major life transition, unexpected event, abuse, social situation, family demands, or a stressful work project.



### When you are faced with a trigger, ask yourself:

#### What am I feeling in my body?

- Is your heart beating fast?
- Is your breathing shallow?
- Do you have a headache?

#### What am I thinking?

- Are you faced with negative thoughts?
- Are you focused on the problem?

#### What is going on in my life?

- Are you unhappy in your career or relationship?
- Are you going through a big life transition?

#### What new behaviours arise?

- Are you eating more junk food?
- Has your appetite decreased?
- Are you having trouble sleeping?
- Are you drinking more alcohol?



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Stress is your body's natural response to a threat in its environment. It can never be eliminated. In fact, sometimes our natural stress response helps to protect us or push us through difficult situations. It reacts with hormonal, respiratory, cardiovascular, and nervous system changes. The more stressors or triggers one has the greater the risk of stress-related illness or injury. Creating coping mechanisms, and eventually removing as many stressors as possible, is your best defense.

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### 2) Develop a Healthy Response

Recognizing what your triggers are and being able to assess your response is the gateway to developing appropriate coping mechanisms. For example, if you know that you experience short, shallow breathing before a big work presentation, breathwork will be a coping mechanism that can drastically improve your stress response. To prepare for a work presentation, you might consider spending some time doing some deep abdominal breathing or meditation.



### 3) Adjust Your Lifestyle

Eliminate as many stressors as possible. Where they can't be eliminated, coping mechanisms will need to become a long-term adjustment. It is important to evaluate your overall lifestyle when encountering significant stress. Remember to take care of yourself! Living a healthy lifestyle can be a helpful overall approach to coping with stress.



Sources: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-management/art-20044151>  
<https://mellowed.com/stress-triggers/>

### Talk with a safe support network

- Chat with a trusted friend or family member.
- Join a community support group.
- Leverage a life coach, counsellor, other mental health professional.

### Make time for fun and relaxation

- Take a bath.
- Burn a scented candle.
- Practice deep breathing.
- Meditate.
- Do some yoga.
- Listen to music.
- Read for pleasure.
- Get a massage.
- Take a scenic walk.
- Write in a journal.
- Cuddle with a pet.
- Enjoy a Laugh.



### Take care of yourself

- Eat a well-balanced diet including complex carbohydrates, healthy lean proteins, and good fats.
- Get 7 to 9 hours of quality sleep per night.
- Exercise regularly.
- Give yourself breaks when needed. It's ok to not be busy!