



American Heart Association.  
Healthy for Good™



# STRESS & STRAIN:

## BODY & BRAIN

Worries about work, money, health care and staying safe in the COVID-pandemic — as well as broader issues like discrimination and climate change — can pile on the stress.

If you're feeling overwhelmed, try these ways to notch down your stress yourself. Also ask for help or a referral from your health care team on ways to lower your stress.

### WHY IT MATTERS

Simply put, stress can kill. People with high levels of chronic stress or psychological distress are more likely to die of various causes, research shows, including of heart disease and stroke.

Chronic stress is also linked to anxiety disorders and major depression. And stress can underlie other problems, such as irritability, sleep disruption, headaches, changes in appetite, gut discomfort and reduced fertility.

### TRY THESE STRESS-BUSTERS

Fight stress by focusing on your physical and mental health.



**Get out of the house:**  
Take a walk in nature and enjoy the sights and sounds.



**Sleep tight:** Set a regular bedtime and wakeup routine and turn off or dim electronic screens as bedtime approaches.



**Use your network:**  
Reach out and connect regularly with family and friends.



**Put your mind to it:** Explore mindfulness, a type of meditation that focuses your attention on your present experiences without interpretation or judgment.



**Lean on a furry friend:**  
Pets may help reduce physiological reactions to stress.



**Work it out:** Regular physical activity — a recommended 150 minutes of moderate activity, 75 minutes of vigorous activity, or a mix of both weekly — can relieve tension, anxiety and depression and give you an immediate exercise “high.”

For more tips on the mind-heart-body connection, visit [heart.org/BeWell](https://heart.org/BeWell).