

Managing Stress in the Moment

My Progress

- What steps have you taken toward your goal(s) this week?
- How were you able to achieve the steps?
- If not, what got in your way? How will you overcome that barrier?

Let's Discuss

- What unexpected stressful situations did you encounter the past week?
- How did you react to it and how did it turn out?
- What's the first thing you notice about yourself when you're in a stressful situation?
- How did the stressful situation impact your symptoms or problems?



Stacia's Story

"Lots of little things used to stress me out every day and it was a major problem for me. I didn't realize that I could do something about it until I started looking into all the different ways of reacting to the stress. The stress of being in a crowded room, like at the doctor's office, used to trigger flashbacks so bad I would have to leave. But, once I learned to use strategies like grounding and breathing, I could handle some of those stressors which keeps my symptoms from flaring up. Now I can do the things I want and need to do a lot more easily."

— STACIA, mom, wife, friend, person in recovery from co-occurring disorders

Good to Know

- Stress is a **natural part** of everyone's life but too much stress can make a person's symptoms or problems worse. Learning about skills to manage stress in the moment is one way to reduce the negative impact of stress.
- Stress can be described as **a feeling of pressure, strain, or tension**. It is common for people to use phrases like "under stress" or "stressed out" when they are having difficulties in a situation or event.
- We can't always predict or prevent the things that cause us stress, but **we can choose how to react to it**. Understanding that we have a choice about how we react can be really empowering.
- Everyone experiences stress in **different ways** and everyone finds **different coping strategies** helpful. Trying out different strategies can help us figure out what works best for us.
- **Practicing skills** when we are not under stress can make us feel more confident and it will be easier to use those skills when unexpected stressful situations pop up in our day-to-day life.

My Experiences

Stacia found it helpful to figure out what situations made her feel most stressed so she could practice the strategies that would work best for her. Daily hassles are unexpected stressful situations. Practicing skills to manage stress in the moment can be helpful when they happen. On the next page, check the boxes next to the hassles you have experienced in the last week. You can then rate how stressful the experience was and check the box if you are interested in finding ways to cope with this stress.

Daily Hassle	This has happened to me	How stressful this is for me (from 1-10)
Waiting in a long line	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Missing the bus/train	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Forgot wallet/purse at home	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Having an argument with a friend	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Dealing with an unpleasant person	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Getting stuck in traffic	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Too noisy at home or at work	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Spilling something	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Something breaks	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Sleeping through an alarm	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Getting a minor injury	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Plans are canceled	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Once Stacia learned about her stressors, she could then develop new ways of thinking about them. When we experience daily hassles, it can be easy to get caught up in the negative thoughts about the situation. Changing the way we think about them can help us to reduce our stress in the moment. Look at the provided examples and then try to come up with some of your own examples of old and new thoughts.

OLD THOUGHT

It's not right that they canceled on me. We made plans to go to this event months ago.

This stupid coffee maker is a piece of garbage, it should work properly.

Why do bad things always happen to me?

NEW THOUGHT

I am disappointed I don't get to see them, but it does give me a chance to spend time with someone else I care about.

I don't like it when things break because it makes me worry that replacing them means I won't have enough money to spend on things I like.

I have been having bad luck lately, I guess it's a good opportunity for me to grow.

Let's Practice Paced Breathing

Relaxation strategies such as paced breathing can help you cope with stress in the moment and reduce some of its negative impacts. Paced breathing involves deep breathing, which encourages us to relax, and counting, which helps get our mind off the feelings of stress. Many people find it helpful to practice this skill regularly, so they can more easily use this skill in moments of stress:

1. Develop the steps of paced breathing:

- Breathe in for 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath for 2 seconds.
- Breathe out for 4 seconds.
- Pause for 2 seconds.
- Repeat ten times or as many times as needed until you feel your stress drop.

2. Watch your worker demonstrate the steps of the skill, then try it out together.

3. Discuss with your worker how the practice felt, what you did well, and how you might do it differently in the future.

4. Continue to practice and discuss with your worker.

Next Steps

- What did you find helpful about our meeting today?
- What would you like to do for your next step toward your goal(s)?
- Practice Paced Breathing to prepare for a stressful situation.
- I'd like to do something else _____.