

Make stress work for you, not against you

Stress is your natural reaction to change in your environment. That’s why your stress level is always changing, from year to year, day to day, even hour to hour. There’s no doubt that too much uncontrolled stress can have a negative impact on your life. However, stress can also be used to your advantage. The key is to understand your stressors and your values, and then get these two things to support each other. Here’s how:

FIRST, make a list of your stressors.

Stressors can vary for individuals, and may include things such as work-related tasks, finances, and traffic. Then, on a scale of 1-10, rate them on their level of impact. 0=very little impact/10= high impact.

Ex: Finances 10	_____	_____
Ex: Work 6	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

NEXT, make a list of the values that are important in your life.

Make sure you are selecting your values and not the values of other people in your life. On a scale of 1-10 rate them on their level of importance 0=important/10=extremely important.

Ex: Travel with family 10	_____	_____
Ex: Healthy Eating 8	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

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Now that you know what is truly important to you and what's causing you the highest stress, ask yourself, "How can I align my values with the level of stress I operate best under?" You're trying to figure out how to use your stress to work in your favor for each category based on their ratings!

For example:

After rating my finances stressor at a 10, **I will** spend 30 minutes each day after work at 6:00pm researching ways to improve my financial planning knowledge, starting Monday, April 22, 2013, until the next time I reassess my stress and values in 1 month. This will help me spend more time traveling with family by allowing me to save money for a fun rafting trip.

After rating my _____ stressor at a _____, **I will** _____, starting _____, until the next time I reassess my stress and values in _____. This will help me _____.

****Attention: Please speak with your doctor or a mental health professional if you ever feel you can't manage your stress, have exhausted all your resources, or are feeling too overwhelmed. Outside resources are available.****

Sources: Healthwise database: "Stress Management" "Examining Your Beliefs to Manage Stress"
Author: Healthwise Staff Medical Review: Kathleen Romito, MD - Family Medicine & Lisa S. Weinstock, MD - Psychiatry

 **Call your health coach if you have questions.**

