

BUZZ, BODY & BITES

A newsletter for actively aging adults
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Family & Consumer Sciences
April, 2021 Newsletter

Buzz

SIGNS OF STRESS

Stress is your body's way of responding to a threat or demand. It prepares you to respond to the demand, but if it goes unchecked, it can be damaging to your body.

Here are some common signs of stress:

- Feelings of fear, anger, sadness, worry, numbness, or frustration
- Changes in appetite, energy, desires, and interests
- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Difficulty sleeping or nightmares
- Physical reactions such as headaches, body pains, stomach problems, and skin rashes
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Worsening of mental health conditions
- Increased use of tobacco, alcohol, and other substances

If you are struggling to cope with stress, there are many ways to get help. Call your healthcare provider if stress gets in the way of your daily activities for several days in a row.



What We Know and Can Do About COVID-Related Stress

We all know the COVID-19 pandemic has caused huge challenges across many realms of our lives. Older adults are the most vulnerable to the clinical effects of the virus, and the social consequences have also caused challenges. A recently published report of the National Health and Aging Trends Study (NHATS) reported information from 3,188 older adults and showed the challenges and increased stress being experienced by older adults due to COVID-19.

The study showed that 28% of study participants were feeling moderately or severely anxious and 7% were not sleeping well, which are significant indicators of stress. Social distancing emerged as the biggest challenge of dealing with COVID-19. About half of the respondents reported to have missed events that gave them joy and meaning of life (e.g., birthdays, religious celebrations, trips, and sporting events) and one-third mentioned being restricted from visiting their loved ones in a hospital or nursing home. Another challenge was the delay of healthcare. Putting off planned healthcare caused worry among 37% of the respondents. Also, volatile finances presented trials since 7% experienced decreasing monthly income attributed to this unique circumstance.

According to the American Psychological Association, prolonged stress at elevated levels can have long-lasting mental health consequences. With increasing stress due to the current situation, it is important to actively try to relieve stress in our lives. The following evidence-based recommendations are suggested to help people manage their stress:

- ◇ Practice the rule of "three good things" and ask friends and family to do the same. The rule states that at the end of each day, reflect on three good things that happened — large or small. This helps decrease anxiety, counter depression and build emotional resilience.
- ◇ Stay connected with friends and family including virtually. This helps build emotional resilience, so you can support one another.
- ◇ Practice self-care in 15- or 30-minute increments throughout the day. This can include taking a short walk, calling a friend or watching a funny show.
- ◇ Give yourself permission to take a break from the news, social media or even certain friends. Constantly exposing ourselves to negative information, images and rhetoric maintains our stress at unhealthy levels.
- ◇ Keep things in perspective. Try to reframe your thinking to reduce negative interpretations of day-to-day experiences and events.

Contributed by Cherrie Park, Ohio State University

Bites

Golden Milk Tea



This is a versatile drink that can be served hot or cold. Turmeric has anti-oxidant and anti-inflammatory properties and gives this drink a rich earthy flavor, that is tempered by the honey and cinnamon. If you choose to add the pepper and ginger, it will add a little heat.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup low-fat milk or milk alternative (almond milk, soy milk, etc)
- 1 cup water
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 (1 inch) piece of fresh turmeric, peeled and thinly sliced or grated. If you don't have fresh turmeric you can use 1/2 teaspoon dried powder.
- 1 (1/2 inch) piece of fresh ginger, peeled and thinly sliced (optional)
- 1 tablespoon of honey
- 1/4 teaspoon whole black peppercorns (optional)
- Ground cinnamon (for serving)

Instructions:

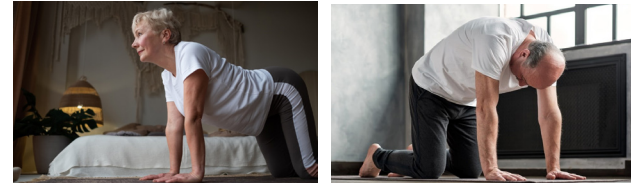
Mix all the ingredients except the ground cinnamon in a saucepan and bring to a low boil. Reduce heat and simmer until the liquid takes on the flavor and turns a nice golden yellow (about 10 minutes). Strain.

Drink immediately or refrigerate in a covered container. Heat up to drink. If you use dried turmeric, it will settle upon storage, so be sure to mix the container before drinking.

Body

Cat-Cow Pose

Supports the back, improves posture and balance, and relieves stress



Cow

Cat

1. Get down on your hands and knees on a carpeted floor or exercise mat. Hands under your shoulders and knees under hips.
2. COW: Curl toes under and inhale. Tilt your pelvis back so your tailbone sticks up, drop your belly toward the floor keeping stomach muscles hugging your spine, lift gaze to the ceiling.
3. Return to your original position.
4. CAT: Place tops of feet on floor. Exhale, tip your pelvis forward, tuck in your tailbone. Draw your navel to your spine and drop your head.
5. Repeat on each inhale and exhale for 5 to 10 breaths. Return to original position between each.

Mind Games

Rebus puzzles, also known as word picture puzzles or picture riddles, use images or words to convey a phrase or message, typically a common idiom or expression. To help you solve them, make sure to look at word placement, size, and quantity. Take your time and don't give up. These can be pretty tricky. Source: rd.com/list/rebus-puzzles.



1. _____



2. _____



3. _____



4. _____



5. _____



6. _____

RESOURCES

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish.

Lifeline Crisis Chat
<https://www.crisistextline.org/> Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a Crisis Counselor

The Eldercare Locator: 1-800-677-1116, TDD/TTY: 711

National Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522

Veteran's Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Crisis Chat or text: 8388255

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