

## How Well Do You Manage Stress?

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Stress is something we all experience from time to time. There are different types of stress, some of them good, and some of them bad.

Emotional stress typically occurs when we are in situations that are difficult or challenging. Something that stresses one individual may not stress another.

Physical stress is a physical reaction of the body to various triggers. The pain experienced after surgery is an example of physical stress. Physical stress can lead to emotional stress.

To manage stress, we need to make emotional changes in order to control and reduce the tension that occurs in these types of situations.

What are some factors that impact our stress level? How can we manage them?

**Attitude:** Your attitude can influence whether a situation or emotion is stressful. People with negative attitudes report more stress in their lives than those with a positive attitude.

- Look for the positive in situations; don't always dwell on the negative
- Plan fun activities; what makes you laugh?
- Take breaks as often as you can

**Diet:** Poor diet can put the body in a state of physical stress and weaken the immune system, making a person more vulnerable to illness. Poor diet can include making poor food choices, not eating enough, or not eating on a normal schedule. This form of physical stress can decrease our ability to deal with emotional stress because a lack of nutritious food can impact the way our brains work.

- Eat foods that are good for you
- Eat normal-sized portions on a regular schedule

**Physical Activity:** Not getting enough exercise can put the body in a stressed state. Physical activity has many benefits, and can help promote an overall sense of well-being.

- Begin an exercise program – most experts recommend 150 minutes of aerobic activity per week
- Find a buddy to exercise with you
- If you can't join a gym, try 20 minutes of brisk walking outdoors

**Support System:** Having little or no social support makes stressful situations even more difficult. By nature, we are relational, and need people in our lives that we can trust and count on.

- Make an effort to socialize; you may feel tempted to avoid people when you feel stressed, but spending time with friends can make a big difference in helping you de-stress

**Relaxation:** Relaxation techniques take the focus off of stress and help give your body a break. By practicing relaxation, you can help control your physical and emotional stress levels.

- Practice using relaxation techniques such as guided imagery, listening to music, yoga, or meditation
- Listen to your body when it tells you to slow down and take a break
- Get enough sleep; good sleep habits are one of the best ways to manage stress
- Make time in your schedule for personal interests and hobbies

There are many resources available to help you learn to better manage your stress. You can always reach out to a trained mental health professional to help you learn stress management strategies and how to achieve a more balanced life.



## Drinking Too Much? Fun... or Folly?

Drinking is often portrayed as a fun, adventurous bonding experience with friends and family; just look at those half-time beer commercials!

However, there's a lot these commercials neglect to tell you. Let's start with the facts. Alcohol is the most commonly used addictive substance in the United States. One in every twelve adults suffers from alcohol abuse or dependence, and more than seven million children live in a household where at least one parent is dependent on or has abused alcohol.

### Should you be concerned?

It's easy to think that your drinking habits are under control. Use the information below to determine what your typical drinking pattern is:

	Women	Men
<b>Moderate Drinking</b>	≤1 drink per day	≤2 drinks per day
<b>Low-risk Drinking</b>	≤3 drinks per day or ≤7 drinks per week	≤4 drinks per day or ≤14 drinks per week
<b>At-risk/Binge Drinking</b>	4+ drinks per day	5+ drinks per day

Risky/binge drinking patterns could lead to alcohol problems that can affect all aspects of a person's life.

#### Long-term alcohol use can cause:

- Career complications
- Disruptions in a person's relationships with their family, friends, and community
- Emotional instability
- Financial problems
- Serious health complications

**“Mastery of impulse is all about self-discipline and choice. The mind is a powerful tool with which we have the ability to be in control of ourselves.”**

*~Alaric Hutchinson, Living Peace*

### What to do if you see a risk?

Alcohol abuse is a serious issue that should not be ignored or minimized. If left untreated, abuse can lead to alcoholism. As a result, it is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of alcohol abuse early.

#### Signs of alcohol abuse include:

- Continual use of alcohol to relax, cheer up, sleep, deal with problems, or feel normal
- Drinking alone, in the mornings, or in secret
- Flushed skin and broken capillaries on the face; a husky voice; trembling hands; bloody or black, tarry stools; vomiting blood; or chronic diarrhea
- Headache, anxiety, insomnia, nausea, or other unpleasant symptoms when drinking is stopped
- Irritability and recurrent arguments or fights with family members
- Temporary blackouts or memory loss

#### Signs of addiction include:

- Changing appearance
- Continued alcohol use despite negative consequences
- Family history of addiction
- High alcohol tolerance
- Loss of control
- Neglecting other activities
- Relationship issues
- Risk taking
- Secrecy
- Withdrawal

If you're worried about your own alcohol use, or that of a friend or family member, don't hesitate to seek help. Contact a Lakeland Employee Assistance Program counselor by calling (269) 428-0022