

20 Ways to Cope with Stress

1. IDENTIFY WHAT CAUSES YOU STRESS

We all experience stress for different reasons. Pay attention to activities or people who put a strain on your mental energy, take up a lot of time, activate uncomfortable feelings or cause tension in your body. Honor your energy needs and decide if anything needs to be eliminated. **TRY IT:** Keep a daily stress log to identify what is negatively impacting your daily routine and notice how you are responding/reacting. Review the log and identify stressful events/people you may be able to eliminate, change or get help with.

2. FACE STRESS WITH A GROWTH MINDSET

You aren't doing yourself any favors by fighting against your stress or acting like you aren't stressed. Lean into your stress by paying attention to what you are experiencing and be open to learning and trying new things.

TRY IT: Get out of your comfort zone and put in effort to try something new to take care of yourself. Don't expect perfection the first time you try something new. Ask for help and keep trying. You got this!

3. GET COMFORTABLE WITH FEELINGS, SHARE WITH OTHERS

There is no such thing as "good" or "bad" feelings. Feelings are your reaction to life's events. All feelings matter. To be emotionally well, let yourself experience a range of feelings and share your feelings with others. If discussing your feelings with your support network feels challenging, try journaling or creating art. **TRY IT:** For a day (or more) label your feelings. If you are feeling anger, say to yourself, "I am feeling angry." If you feel happy, say to yourself, "I feel happy." Most likely, you will experience A LOT of feelings in one day.

4. ADD POSITIVITY TO YOUR LIFE

We tend to operate on a negativity bias, by focusing on what we did wrong instead of what we did well. Negative self-talk increases stress and makes it difficult to take care of ourselves. Replacing negative self-talk with positive self-talk will help you release tension and approach stressors with clarity so that you are more productive in putting in effort to reach goals.

TRY IT: Next time you don't do well on an exam, paper or homework, instead of beating yourself up, think about what you can do differently next time and how you are going to make that happen. Reinforce this positivity by reading positive quotes or phrases and surrounding yourself with positive people.

5. PRACTICE GRATITUDE

Feel better by amplifying the good you see in yourself and others by taking time to notice and reflect on what you're thankful for. You might express gratitude for some of the larger things in life such as a job offer, but you can also be grateful for something as simple as a delicious dessert from the dining hall, or a friendly smile from a stranger. **TRY IT:** Keep a daily log of three things you are grateful for and why or capture these moments through photography. Share what you are grateful for with others.

6. MANAGE YOUR TIME

Organize, prioritize, and adapt. Writing things down in either a planner or calendar can help you declutter your brain, as well as visualize where you can spend your time and energy. **TRY IT:** Make a list and prioritize the things you need to get done, make sure to include time for relaxation and self-care. Stick to your schedule but also allow some flexibility to adapt your plans.

7. DO A DIGITAL DETOX

Many of us spend so much of our time on our electronics that we're constantly accessible to others. The need to immediately reply to each text, snap, or tweet can be overwhelming. Every now and then close the laptop, and set your phone to "do not disturb" for some true alone time. **TRY IT:** Plan out a digital detox and stick to it. Use that time to do something relaxing, just for you!

8. GET PLENTY OF SLEEP

If you want to do well at UNH, forget all-nighters and instead go to bed. You need sleep to think clearly, react quickly and create memories. Students who regularly get a good night's sleep perform significantly better than sleep-deprived students. REM sleep, most of which occurs towards the end of a full night's sleep, is particularly important for consolidating newly learned information. **TRY IT:** Aim to get 7+ hours of sleep/night. If you notice you are tired during the day, instead of reaching

WELLNESS SERVICES AT UNH HEALTH & WELLNESS

Wellness Coaching Meet individually with a certified wellness coach to create a customized plan that optimizes your strengths to cope with stress and achieve wellness goals.

Meditation Attend weekly guided meditations or a meditation and mindfulness group. Guided meditations available online.

Paws and Relax Pet Therapy Spend time with a therapy dog to release some of those feel-good hormones.

Massage Therapy 50 minute treatments with licensed massage therapists. Prices start at \$45. Gift certificates available.

Biofeedback Measure and monitor changes in your physiological state while learning breathing, relaxation and meditation techniques.

Events, Workshops & Groups Attend an event or register for one of our groups to start taking care of your wellness.

9. PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION

You will fail. Failure is a sign of your humanity. Instead of beating yourself up, learn how to be self-compassionate by treating yourself with the same gentleness and care you would give to a friend. **TRY IT:** Put your hand on your heart and say to yourself, "Others feel this way. I am not alone. We all struggle." Feel the warm and gentle touch of your hand on your chest. After a moment, remove your hand and notice if you feel any shifts. Putting your hand on your heart releases oxytocin a.k.a. "the cuddle hormone," a good stress hormone that is released when you are around people you love.

10. BE PRESENT

A regular mindfulness practice can help increase your ability to live in the moment rather than worrying about future or dwelling on the past. Being present will help you cope better with life's challenges. **TRY IT:** Pause and drop into your senses by noting what you are hearing, seeing, feeling, tasting, smelling.

11. SET BOUNDARIES

Learning to say "no" is an important part of reducing stress and will help you focus on what's really important. Are you taking a full course load, working part-time and involved in a lot of activities? Having the self-confidence to establish boundaries for yourself, and the skills to assertively communicate those boundaries will help you fill your life with what matters most to you. **TRY IT:** This week, say "no" to something you don't want to do.

12. TAKE SMALL STEPS

Take small steps toward your larger goals. Small successes allow you to gain confidence and momentum to accomplish what you've set forth to achieve. **TRY IT:** For assignments, break them down into smaller, more manageable tasks. For personal wellness goals, know what you're working toward and consider how you can make continual progress by setting realistic weekly goals. Need help setting and meeting goals? Make an appointment with a wellness coach at Health & Wellness.

13. LEARN AND PRACTICE RELAXATION STRATEGIES

Relaxation activities can help you feel calm and able to better concentrate and focus. Some relaxation activities include deep breathing, muscle relaxation, meditation, yoga, tai chi, or massage therapy. **TRY IT:** Get a massage or attend a guided meditation at Health & Wellness or try a gentle yoga class at Hamel Recreation Center.

14. LAUGH - A LOT

Try not to take yourself, or life too seriously. Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. **TRY IT:** Seek out funny people, share a good joke, watch a funny video on YouTube, do something silly, host a game night, play with a pet, or spend time with therapy dogs at the Health & Wellness pet therapy program Paws & Relax.

15. GET SOCIAL

Your brain is wired to help you feel better when you are socially connected. Spend time with people who help you feel safe and understood. **TRY IT:** Reach out to a friend and ask them to hang out. Feel like you need a friend? Look into joining a student organization.

16. NURTURE YOUR ENVIRONMENT

It can be difficult to relax or focus when your desk is a mess, the laundry is stacked on your bed, or clutter has taken over your space. Walking into your room at the end of the day should bring on a feeling of relaxation, not stress. Cleaning your room can help create a more peaceful space, but the act of cleaning can also be a relaxing time to practice mindfulness or an opportunity to be grateful for all the things you have. **TRY IT:** Put on some music and clean your space. Don't forget to wash your sheets and make your bed (which will help you sleep at night).

17. GET OUTSIDE

There's nothing quite like the great outdoors to help breathe in new energy, gain perspective, and calm the mind. Nature can significantly improve your mood and overall mental health. **TRY IT:** Go for a walk, feel the sunshine, and take a breath of fresh air. Even on a dreary day, take time to notice the sights, smells, and sounds of nature.

18. EVERYDAY, DO SOMETHING THAT BRINGS YOU JOY

You deserve joy in your life. Every. Single. Day. **TRY IT:** Before going to bed each night, check-in with yourself and ask "what did I do today that brought me joy?" If you're finding this difficult to answer, plan ahead. Create a self-care calendar noting what you plan to do each day that brings joy and happiness to your life.

19. NOURISH YOUR BODY WITH FOOD AND MOVEMENT

Food and body movement are important to helping your body maintain energy and release tension when under stress. Eat foods you like and find ways to build body movement into your daily routine. **TRY IT:** Nourish your body with a variety of whole grains, vegetables, and fruits. Move your body by walking, running, yoga, dancing, hiking - anything. Avoid tobacco and excessive use of alcohol, caffeine, energy drinks.

20. HELP OTHERS

Helping others can reduce the impact of daily stress on our own mental health and well-being. **TRY IT:** Do someone (and yourself!) a favor by lending a hand, holding open a door, or being someone to lean on.

UNH RESOURCES

Health & Wellness

www.unh.edu/health

Psychological & Counseling Services (PACS)

www.unh.edu/pacs

Hamel Recreation Center

<https://campusrec.unh.edu/>

Center for Academic Resources (CFAR)

www.unh.edu/cfar



Health & Wellness

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