

# STRESS MANAGEMENT

## What happens

Human systems (brains and bodies) get activated when we have too much stress for too long without enough stress release, supports/resources, or rest and recovery time, especially if we feel alone. Our Window of Tolerance, where we function at our best, closes, and we feel either **activated** (angry, anxious, agitated, restless) or **shut down** (depressed, collapsed, blank, flat). Our system is using its age-old wisdom of sensing **danger** and then getting ready to fight, run (fight or flight) or hide in order to achieve **safety** again.

## What can we do about the STRESSORS (sources of stress)?

- Reduce actual stressors – resolve one or more stressors or take steps toward reducing them, ask for help to reduce the stressors.

## What can we do about the STRESS (effects of stress)?

- Reduce perception of stressors – change focus, challenge catastrophic stories, notice what is already resolved, use safe self-talk “I’m OK in this moment.”
- Release absorbed stress – laugh, cry, vent, exercise, move vigorously, sing, vividly imagine taking vigorous action.
- Self-soothing – relaxation breathing, meditation, mindfulness, sensory grounding, safe touch, humming, rocking, prayer, rhythm.
- Resting and recovery – sleep, spend time in nature, be creative, take a break, do a small task that gives a sense of order or control, reduce demands, simplify.
- Connect – notice available supports, talk with a trusted person, support group, therapist, community group, higher power, imagine joining with others having similar experiences.
- Self-compassion – Treat yourself with the kindness you would offer a close friend

## What does not work:

- Ignoring the stress – avoiding or suppressing our feelings and needs
- Wishing we did not have so many stressors. Stressors come with life.
- Staying angry at the forces behind the stressors without taking action (see above) can keep us feeling powerless and it increases the stress.
- Distractions that keep our systems activated and intensity high – electronics, social media, video games, TV. These can be good short-term solutions but won’t resolve the internal stress.
- Distractions that mask our pain or add to our stress – alcohol, drugs, overeating, excessive gaming, other addictive behaviors, etc.
- Beating ourselves up - judging, criticizing, or shaming ourselves.
- Passing the stress off to someone else.