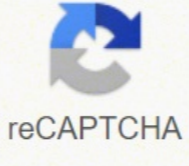




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How to cope with being sad all the time

Photo Courtesy: Davin G Photography/Getty Images No matter what stage of life you're in or what your personal situation looks like, it's a safe bet that you experience stress from time to time — or even a little more often than that. Our lives can get hectic. There's always another work emergency to juggle, more finals to study for and more kids' activities to arrange on the schedule. But there aren't more hours in the day to tend to everything on our to-do lists or the things going on in our personal lives. That can leave us stressed and searching for answers. While stress may be a struggle for us all at times, dealing with it in healthy ways is the key to keep it from running your life. These useful tips can help you manage — and even decrease — your stress levels to maintain control and enjoy some relaxation. While everyone experiences stress at times, many people never really stop to ask themselves why. We've all had those moments when we've turned to cocktails, TV show binges or fast food to smother our feelings. Stress is uncomfortable, and when we feel it for longer periods, it's tempting to ignore that sensation or push it away so we can get some relief. But that doesn't get to the root of the stress, which is what can ultimately help us resolve it. Photo Courtesy: Nicola Katie/Getty Images How often do we really stop and ask ourselves what exactly has us so stressed out in the first place? Stress tends to be a messenger — a loud one at times, but a messenger nonetheless. It's there to tell us that there's a problem we need to deal with or that we've taken on too much and need to take some time out to decompress. The next time you feel stress flaring, take a few moments to sit with it — and yourself — and ask what's going on and how you're feeling about it. Journaling tends to be a great way to get to the root of problems that are sometimes less-than-obvious. You may even discover that the real issue is completely different from what you thought it was. If you're having trouble focusing, you might also consider a guided meditation. Once you know why you're stressed, you'll be better equipped to deal with the problem at the root of your anxiety. Taking a few moments out of your schedule to stare your problems right in the eye isn't always the most attractive proposition. But it could be less painful in the long run. Photo Courtesy: Westend61/Getty Images Anxiety is nothing if not a persistent emotion, and the more you try to ignore it, the louder it's going to knock on the door of your mind. That's when we start snapping at people and reacting to situations because we don't have the presence of mind to respond. By identifying the problem behind your stress, you can start to consciously plan out how you're going to deal with it. At its root, stress is generally a fear of a problem you're not sure how to handle. Once you've identified the problem and have started figuring out the steps you need to take to handle it, your fear should naturally start to ease up a bit. And, you'll feel reassured about having a course of action. Understand Self-Care vs. Selfishness Sometimes, you may find that the problem is simply that you're trying to do too much. Between working, helping kids with schoolwork, managing chronic health issues or dealing with other day-to-day tasks, it may seem like life is one constant to-do list. You may simply need to carve out some time just for yourself. Photo Courtesy: Momo Productions/Getty Images That might be easier said than done, however. Many people mistake self-care for selfishness, but nothing could be further from the truth. If you're constantly stressed out, the reality is that you're going to be a lot less pleasant to be around. You'll naturally become frazzled, reactive and unhappy. According to online therapy community Talkspace, results of a 2017 study show that "those who actively choose to have alone time experience stress relief and relaxation when they spend their time alone." Sometimes the most caring thing you can do for everyone around you is to take some time to yourself. Arrange a time — adding it to your schedule to make it official — when your spouse can take care of the kids and you can have a few hours to read, watch a funny movie, exercise or do nothing at all. Just by giving yourself this small gift, you'll lower the odds of becoming subconsciously resentful at all the other things and people that require your time. Stay Serene — When You Can There's an old prayer that asks for the serenity to "accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can and the wisdom to know the difference." Whether you're religious, spiritual or neither, it still serves as a great reminder that we can't control everything. Photo Courtesy: Svetikd/Getty Images When you've identified the object of your stress and set out to make a plan to deal with it, it's important to separate the things you can control from those that you can't. Sometimes it'll be easy to think of solid steps you can take to solve your problem. Other times, it may seem like there's virtually nothing you can do and that the situation is totally out of your control. Remind yourself, however, that this is never quite going to be the case. The truth is that none of us can control all of the things that happen to us in our lives. But the one thing we can always control is how we choose to respond to the things that happen to us. Decide what you can control, put your plan into action and consciously work towards letting the rest go, knowing that you've done what you can. Cultivate Gratitude When you're walking around in a cloud of stress, it can be easy to feel like your problems are all there is to life. But your problems are not the end of the whole world — they're not even the end of your world. Photo Courtesy: Carol Yepes/Getty Images Rather than giving them your focus and power, refocus on the things you do have going for you that you're grateful for. Maybe it's your kids, your character, your spouse or the roof over your head. Try to make a habit of listing at least three things that you're thankful for every day; the benefits of doing so are clear. Showing gratitude can be a great way to shift your perspective and remind you that life is far better enjoyed than endured. Resource Links: MORE FROM SYMPTOMFIND.COM Sadness is characterized by a low mood or feeling down, often in response to something that was disappointing or discouraging, or caused other negative feelings. Sadness can happen on its own, but is usually relieved by the passage of time, self-care activities, or doing something you enjoy to cheer yourself up. Depression, on the other hand, is characterized by an unusually low mood, sometimes with no real cause or trigger, for two or more weeks. Depression can also be accompanied by outbursts of anger or irritability, fatigue/lethargy, and a disinterest in activities you usually enjoy. Depression isn't easily relieved, and can span from mild symptoms to clinically severe symptoms that need to be attended to by a doctor (such as suicidal thoughts). While it can be linked to a particular trigger at first, depression will often persist even when the triggering situation is resolved. The main difference between experiencing sadness versus depression is that sadness is universal; depression is not. And while there are varying degrees of depression, there are things you can do to cope with sadness and depressive feelings. Situational sadness and mild depression can be challenging to differentiate. However, both often respond to lifestyle changes and better self-care habits. Here are some things that may help: Doing activities that engage multiple senses like: Watching a favorite movie/show or looking at art, a sunset, etc. Eating a favorite snack or candy that you see as a treat Listening to or making music that expresses how you feel Touching a favorite blanket, stuffed animal, or other textured object Connecting with others or talking to a friend or loved one Giving to others or getting involved with your community through volunteering Moving your body like walking or running, working out, dancing, or playing sports Doing things that you enjoy like playing with your pets, or creating something, like art, music, crafts, gardening, mosaics — anything that engages you and results in something you find satisfying Journaling with pen and paper, voice recording, or in an e-journal (journaling with paper and pen has benefits that e-journaling doesn't have, but all forms of journaling are helpful) Crying - while some people resist crying, crying can be profoundly cathartic and beneficial; not only can crying be a satisfying expression of sadness, it can bring greater clarity about the cause of that sadness Educating yourself about mental health and wellness; JED has lots of resources to help Giving it time - time can sometimes be enough to alleviate sadness; being patient, allowing the feelings to arise and come out through crying, journaling, taking quiet time to be in nature or with yourself, and/or talking to others, and simply accepting where you are can make a big difference Checking in with your physical and emotional needs including: Getting enough sleep, water, and healthy food Ensuring you have enough leisure time compared to your time working When we're close to someone, we're often best suited to notice when they might be feeling more down than normal. It's important to reach out and check in. If you're not sure where to start, these tips can help you start the conversation. Some other things you can do include: Avoid shaming Feeling sad or depressed can often impact how we accomplish daily tasks and how we interact with our loved ones. This can cause negative feelings like guilt and shame that can further contribute to an already depressed mood. Avoid language that shames them for feeling sad or shames them for how their depression is affecting their life. Be a good listener When your loved one does share their feelings or concerns, be present and listen with an open heart and mind. The kinds of questions and comments that arise in each of us when we're in a space of authentic openness and care can be really helpful for the person sharing with us. But, to listen and respond from an authentic place of care means you need to temporarily set aside your own worries, judgments, to-do lists, and/or anything else demanding your attention and be open to listening. Simply showing that you care and that you can be fully present for your loved one as they share can make a big difference. And, as much as you might want to leave your loved one feeling "up" when the conversation ends, trying to fix someone's problems or cheer them up can feel like a lot of unwanted pressure to someone feeling sad or contemplative. Lastly, sticking to simply listening, or to asking open, honest questions, is often much more helpful than dispensing wisdom or advice, unless it's solicited or very minimal. Ask how you can help This is an important question to ask because different people have different needs. Something that might be really helpful to one person may have no effect or even be harmful to another. Let them tell you what they need. If they don't have a concrete answer, or don't know exactly what they need help with, offer small, doable things that you'd be willing to help them with. This could include: Being an active, available listener the next time they're feeling sad Planning a movie or game night or other fun activity Helping them with a small task like laundry, dishes, studying, etc. Offering to accompany them to a first therapy appointment, or to get coffee/lunch before or after their appointments as a reward for going Pay attention Notice changes in feelings, thoughts or behaviors. Sometimes, sadness stays at just that — a feeling. But sometimes it can lead to more persistent depression. If you're concerned that your friend or loved one might be suffering from depression, refer them to a licensed professional or crisis hotline. If they need immediate help, text "START" to 741-741 or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). It's common to dismiss our own feelings or changes in behavior as "nothing" or "just a rough patch." But how can you notice when your sadness or depressive feelings are becoming more than just temporary? Some things you should ask yourself and keep asking: Is your sadness getting worse? Is your sadness persistent, or doesn't seem to ever go away? Do you get sad at a specific time of year, month, or day? Do you experience sudden fluctuations in mood? Do you ever experience feelings of euphoria, or feeling unreasonably energetic or "high," before or after feeling depressed? Did you experience a big life change before you started feeling sad? This could be the loss of a loved one, a change in job, school, or living situation, etc. Do you ever have thoughts of intentionally hurting yourself for any reason, such as to punish yourself or to "feel something"? Do you ever have thoughts about ending your life or wanting to die? Passive or active suicidal thoughts, like "I wish I were dead," are cause for concern and should be talked about with someone you trust. If you feel actively suicidal it's important to talk to your doctor, a therapist, or other authority (parent/caregiver, teacher etc.) immediately. Remember, sadness is normal, but if at any point your depressive symptoms are getting in the way of how you live your life, or how you perform in work, school, or in your relationships, please see a professional for help. Are you a student? Find mental resources on your campus. Are you an educator? Bring mental health curriculum to your school. Type your search term below

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