

JANUARY 3, 2018 @ 12:55 PM

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Follow These Stress Relief Tips

Some stress in your life is healthy. It can motivate you to change behavior and develop skills, especially in military life. However, constant stress is not good for you and can cause health issues and performance problems. Here are some tips for recognizing and managing stress.

Learn to recognize when you feel stress

Stress can cause a variety of different symptoms. Some people experience back pain and tense muscles, headaches, nausea or stomach pain, trouble sleeping and fatigue. Less-obvious symptoms include:

- Irritability
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Difficulty making decisions
- Trouble concentrating
- Apathy
- Feelings of being out of control
- Changes in behavior – low energy or loss of libido

Learn how to manage stress

The good news is that once you recognize the signs of stress, you are well on your way to managing it. [Try this simple Chill Drill](#) designed by a therapist specializing in working with service members and their families to help reverse the symptoms of stress. You can also use these stress-management techniques to help minimize your symptoms:

- **Focus on the things you can control.** When you feel stressed out by a situation, think about what

you CAN control. Give yourself some action steps. If your actions will have no impact on the situation, then learn to accept it for what it is.

- **Exercise.** Commit to a regular workout. Run. Lift. Swim.
- **Make time for your favorite activity.** Treat yourself to some “me” time. Continue doing those activities that give you pleasure. Try to fit leisure activities and hobbies into your day.
- **Simplify your life.** Do whatever you can to simplify your life. Say no to social commitments you don't enjoy and limit your time on email and social networking sites.
- **Laugh often.** Look for the humor in everyday life. Rent your favorite comedy or laugh with a friend. You can take your military duty seriously without taking yourself seriously.
- **Breathe deeply.** By taking long, slow breaths, you increase your oxygen and calm yourself down. Even a few deep breaths can relax tension throughout your body.
- **Stay in the present.** Try to be aware of what is happening in the present moment and focus your attention on what you are doing in any given moment. When your thoughts turn to the past and the future, gently try to bring them back to the here and now.
- **Learn how to relax.** Try some visualization exercises, such as picturing yourself in a relaxed or happy setting like the beach. Go for a walk. Listen to music. Read a book.
- **Get organized.** Too much clutter can add to feeling things are out of control. Do your best to get rid of it. File old paperwork. Clean out your closet. Donate your excess belongings to a second-hand clothing store.
- **Find and give support.** Reach out to others in similar situations or in your community. Your community can be your installation, neighborhood, religious community, co-workers or just a community of close friends.
- **Seek out confidential counseling.** Talking with someone can sometimes help problems seem smaller and more manageable. **Free and confidential non-medical counseling** is available through Military OneSource. Call 800-342-9647 at any time.

If you need immediate help or are experiencing a crisis, contact the **Military Crisis Line** at 800-273-8255 and Press 1.

[DOWNLOAD THE CHILL DRILLS 1 - OVERVIEW](#)

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