

Wellness Wednesday

February 16, 2022



This week's Wellness Wednesday will focus on stress, anxiety, and coping. The need is great within the world for education and tools to manage these areas.

Stress and Anxiety

Stress and anxiety are like the glass of water. Think about them for a short time and everything is fine. Think about them for a longer period of time and they begin to feel uncomfortable. And if you think about them all the time, you will feel paralyzed – incapable of doing anything or moving forward.

I can add to this analogy for you as well. What happens when we add more water? What if you fill the glass to the top? Things tend to get shaky. You have difficulty focusing and water spills

out. Now you worry about the water that has spilled too. If someone is talking to you now you have difficulty paying attention and holding the glass still. You've also been taught that spilling is bad and you should be ashamed of yourself for letting those emotions show. So now you can't focus, you feel shame and to top it off your arm hurts.

You might just consider to put the glass down for a while. While it is down and feeling returns to your arm, you can clearly use your skills to deal with the task which caused you to hold the glass of water for so long. Most people choose to continue to hold the glass of water rather than put it down. Sometimes it can even be of help to release (spill) a bit of water. There is no shame in spilling a bit of H₂O, after all it's just water.

People who have heard that being mentally tough means battling stress by holding their arms up to keep the glass of water from spilling have missed the point. Toughness isn't enduring pain for little reason, mental toughness is about understanding that emotionally intelligent people sometimes put the glass down and figure out a better strategy. When you allow stress to interfere with your enjoyment or performance or work or family or life, you are just waiting for your arm to fall off. Rather than be paralyzed, take action. This is in part what mental training is all about. Learning the skills of when to hold it up and when to **just put it down**.

Find Ways to Cope



Susan Folkman



Richard Lazarus

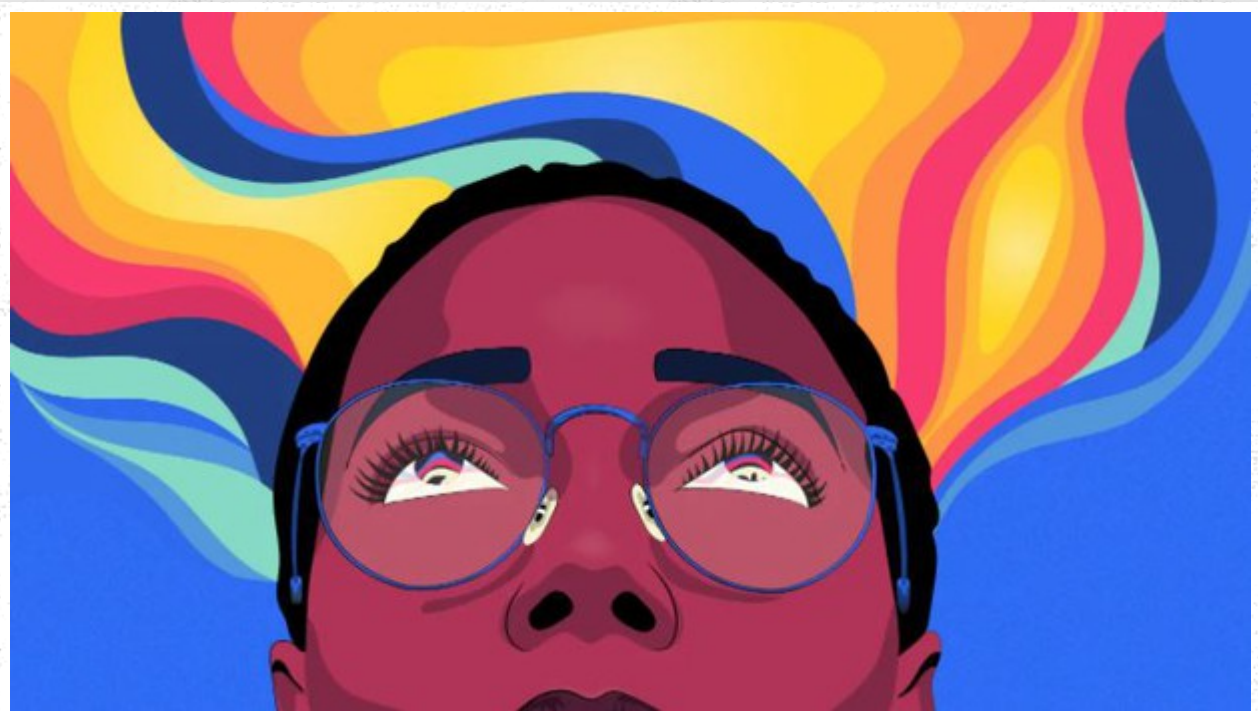
Lazarus and Folkman (1984) distinguished two fundamental kinds of coping: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. In problem-focused coping, one attempts to manage or alter the problem that is causing one to experience stress (i.e., the stressor).

Problem-focused coping strategies are similar to strategies used in everyday problem-solving: they typically involve identifying the problem, considering possible solutions, weighing the costs and benefits of these solutions, and then selecting an alternative (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). As an example, suppose Bradford receives a midterm notice that he is failing statistics

would be proactive in trying to alleviate the source of the stress. He might contact his professor to discuss what must be done to raise his grade, he might also decide to set aside two hours daily to study statistics assignments, and he may seek tutoring assistance. A problem-focused approach to managing stress means we actively try to do things to address the problem.



Emotion-focused coping, in contrast, consists of efforts to change or reduce the negative emotions associated with stress. These efforts may include avoiding, minimizing, or distancing oneself from the problem, or positive comparisons with others (“I’m not as bad off as she is”), or seeking something positive in a negative event (“Now that I’ve been fired, I can sleep in for a few days”). In some cases, emotion-focused coping strategies involve reappraisal, whereby the stressor is construed differently (and somewhat self-deceptively) without changing its objective level of threat (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). For example, a person sentenced to federal prison who thinks, “This will give me a great chance to network with others,” is using reappraisal. If Bradford adopted an emotion-focused approach to managing his midterm deficiency stress, he might watch a comedy movie, play video games, or spend hours on Twitter to take his mind off the situation. In a certain sense, emotion-focused coping can be thought of as treating the symptoms rather than the actual cause.



While many stressors elicit both kinds of coping strategies, problem-focused coping is more likely to occur when encountering stressors we perceive as controllable, while emotion-focused coping is more likely to predominate when faced with stressors that we believe we are powerless to change (Folkman & Lazarus, 1980). Clearly, emotion-focused coping is more effective in dealing with uncontrollable stressors. For example, the stress you experience when a loved one dies can be overwhelming. You are simply powerless to change the situation as there is nothing you can do to bring this person back. The most helpful coping response is emotion-focused coping aimed at minimizing the pain of the grieving period. Fortunately, most stressors we encounter can be modified and are, to varying degrees, controllable. A person who cannot stand her job can quit and look for work elsewhere; a middle-aged divorcee can find another potential partner; the freshman who fails an exam can study harder next time, and a breast lump does not necessarily mean that one is fated to die of breast cancer.

Refocus and Recharge

Below you will find 9 ways to REFOCUS AND RECHARGE. Sometimes we just need a bit more balance in our lives to reduce stress and anxiety.



1. Re-balance work and home-

If you're working too hard and not playing enough-it is time to input dates for fun in your calendar.



2. Build in regular exercise-

If you're working too hard and not playing enough-it is time to input dates for fun in your calendar.



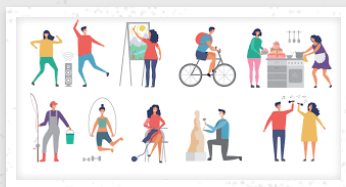
3. Eat Well and limit alcohol use or stimulant use-

Alcohol, nicotine, and caffeine can reduce stress temporarily, but in the long run can create more harm. Nourish your bodies with the good stuff!



4. Connection-

We are wired to need people in our lives. Connect with supportive people and lean on those in your life that you trust.



5. Hobby Time-

Make sure to spend some time enjoying activities you love or finding a new hobby.



6. Practice meditation, yoga, or stress-reduction-

Relaxation techniques activate a state of restfulness that can help us to feel rejuvenated.



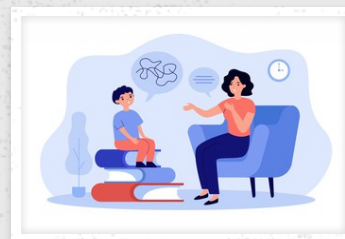
7. Sleep Enough-

If you sleep less than 7-8 hours a night, your body tolerates stress less. Create a healthy nighttime routine to improve hours and quality of your sleep.



8. Beach Please-

Take a vacation to reset your mind and body. Sometimes we need to just get away from it all. Disconnect from your devices.



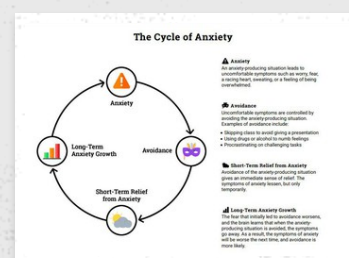
9. See a Therapist-

If negative thoughts overwhelm you, it is okay to reach out to a mental health professional for support.

Anxiety and Fear

Anxiety and Fear are one in the same. When we are scared, we can either face our fear, avoid what is scary to us, or freeze in the face of the scary obstacle. The cycle of anxiety can be repetitive if we do not shift our behaviors to being able to face it.

Rollercoasters are scary too, until we find ourselves feeling relieved after facing it. Anxiety is no different. Face the scary things.



anxiety: aren't you like...worried?
me: about what?
anxiety: idk.
me: oh my god you're right



Reflection

Take a few moments to identify some things you are afraid of.
Once you have identified a few things, how have you been **FACING**
the fear?



Houston Strong

In-person
community
groups

The Hope & Healing Center
5025 Riverway Drive
Rooms: 104 & The Green Room

Resurrection MCC
2025 W 11th St.
Rooms: The Gathering Place &
The Bookstore

St. John the Divine Episcopal Church
2450 River Oaks Blvd
Rooms: 201 & 203

Bammel Church of Christ
2700 Cypress Creek Parkway
Ministry Building; Rooms 104/105

Christ Church Sugar Land
3300 Austin Pkwy
Second floor of Education Building;
Rooms: 208 & 209

Christ Church United Methodist
6363 Research Forest Dr.
Rooms: S111 & S112

See our website for new group announcements and safety information

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

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EAP ENGLISH
FLYER

CHECK THESE
OUT!

EAP SPANISH
FLYER





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