

How Will You Spend *Your* Life?

Everyone experiences stress in daily life. Most of us are bombarded with expectations, commitments, and demands in our professional and personal lives. The difference is how we respond.

While some people actively manage the amount of stress in their lives and step up self-care when it gets out of control, others of us aren't aware of the toll it is taking on our physical and emotional well-being.

The fact is, between 70 and 90% of doctor visits are stress-related. Stress causes anxiety, headaches, muscle spasms, heart attacks, poor work performance, chronic disease, relationship problems, ...and that's just for starters! Sometimes life changes come in clusters, resulting in accumulated stress that can lead to major health problems.

The good news: By listening to your body, making new choices, and training yourself to respond differently to the inevitable dramas in life, you can live a joyful, productive, and deeply satisfying life. Begin it today.

Most health insurance policies cover the service of MFTs so long as the services are "medically necessary." This typically includes coverage for face-to-face sessions for a diagnosable mental health problem. Such coverage may be limited. Please contact your health insurance company for detailed information about the coverage available to you and your family.



California Association of
Marriage and Family Therapists

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TURNING STRESS INTO HARMONY

The first step in managing stress is becoming aware of stressors. If you can't reduce or delay them, at least balance them with activities you find rejuvenating and enjoyable. In fact, experts say the relaxation response after a hearty laugh can last up to 45 minutes!

Signs & Symptoms of Stress

1 These physical symptoms may result from stress or mask other conditions besides stress, so consult a doctor for an accurate diagnosis:

- sleep disturbances/fatigue
- weight gain or loss, eating disorders
- shortness of breath
- skin problems (hives, eczema)
- immune system suppression (e.g. frequent colds, flu, infections)
- constipation or diarrhea
- chest pain, irregular heart beat
- high blood pressure
- muscle tension
- cold hands or feet

2 Emotional symptoms may include:

- nervousness, anxiety
- depression, moodiness
- overreaction to small things
- lack of concentration
- feeling out of control

3 Relational symptoms may include:

- increased arguments
- conflict with co-workers or employers
- road rage
- isolation from social activities
- domestic or workplace violence

Remember—how you view stressful situations influences your stress response. Be aware of negative self-talk and make it positive.

WHAT YOU CAN DO RIGHT NOW

- ❑ **Relax and breathe deeply.** Place a blue dot on places you look frequently (e.g. your watch, computer screen, refrigerator) to trigger a reminder to take three, slow deep breaths that fill your chest when you inhale and lift your lower abdomen when you exhale.
- ❑ **Pace yourself.** Use lists to prioritize what needs to get done. Check in with your body to release muscle tension and check energy levels. Even before you feel drained, take breaks to do something fun and energizing, whether it's a simple stretch, brief walk, or chat on the phone with a friend.
- ❑ **Lower your stress arousal.** When used consistently, many tools will lower your physiological arousal to stress. Try yoga, massage, meditation, exercise, relaxing music, reading for pleasure, and visualizations.
- ❑ **Nurture supportive relationships.** Spend more time with positive, encouraging like-minded people and eliminate or minimize the time you spend with non-supportive people. Ask for help when you need it.
- ❑ **Improve your diet.** Reduce caffeine, sugar, and don't smoke! Limit your alcohol intake and consider adding vitamins and supplements based on your overall health.

OFFERING EXTRA SUPPORT About Marriage and Family Therapists

Marriage and Family Therapists (MFTs) are relationship experts. They work with individuals, couples, families, children, adolescents, and the elderly, providing support and perspective as patients struggle with life's challenges.

Licensed by the State of California, MFTs are psychotherapists who are uniquely trained and credentialed to assess, diagnose, and treat a wide range of issues so individuals achieve more adequate, satisfying and productive relationships and social adjustment.

The California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (CAMFT) is an independent statewide non-profit organization made up of over 28,000 practicing Marriage and Family Therapists. CAMFT is dedicated to advancing marriage and family therapy as a healing art, science, and mental health profession. In fact, CAMFT sponsors TherapistFinder.com so Californians can gain access to qualified local experts who can help.



Seeking a Marriage and Family Therapist or other mental health professional to assist with life's difficulties is a sign of courage and a step in the right direction. Always ask about a therapist's special areas of expertise (e.g. grief counseling, children's issues, relationship counseling) before you engage them to ensure it's the right fit for you.

TherapistFinder is a California-wide interactive, online directory that is user-friendly and searchable by name, location, and area of expertise. It's your introduction to one or more qualified psychotherapists who hold a California license.

