

Taking Control of Yourself Visualize Your Stress



In today's complex and crazy world, who doesn't get stressed? Handling stress is an important strength for everyone but imagine having a chronic illness which both, increases your stress levels and also **THRIVES** on the body's reaction to stress! Managing this stress takes more than just luck, but with the right prevention and coping strategies, we can minimize the negative effect of it on our health.

Your health care providers will probably pay more attention to the physical effects of your chronic disease, than to the emotional and psychological stress that come with it. However, this type of stress is very real and can be very draining, so remember that you are not alone and not crazy!

It may be helpful to develop your own strategies and a personal stress relief list to help you through the rough days.

Weathering the Storm: Coping Strategies to Help Alleviate Stress

Exercise - any kind helps!

-Healthy eating and no matter what your medication is doing to you - **DON'T TRY TO DIET.**

-Play a very competitive board game and win. 😊

-Visit or visualize a quiet place where you can have some time alone.

-Spend time with your friends or, if you are stuck at home, hang out on Facebook

-Read a trashy magazine or good book (long sagas are great!)

-Massage.

-Listen to your favourite (and calming) music.

-Keep a journal (online or a paper diary), try writing a story or poetry.

-Rent your favourite movie. Dirty Dancing anyone?

-Spend time with your favourite people or animals.

-Do ART - drawing, painting, sculpting, scrapbooking, jewelry making.

-Practice meditation and breathing techniques.

-Sleep, rest and relax.

Before Stress Hits!

Not all stress can be avoided but with a few prevention techniques, we may be able to handle it more effectively:

- Talk to those you trust before your stress level gets out of control. Don't be afraid to involve your family, friends, doctor, therapist or a counselor.
- Don't blame yourself.
- Be Prepared. Keep your emergency plans organized in case you have a sudden flare-up. Laptops and mobile phones are helpful.
- Keep communication lines open and prepare others for your sudden changes. Your loved ones do not see you as a burden and can be a key part of your coping system.
- Laugh!!
- Surround yourself with positive people.
- Keep your doctor informed about how you feel. Some medications can increase these feelings. Doctors care too, and want to see you as mentally and physically healthy as possible.
- Find your distractions.
- Identify a good listener to call when you need help.
- Let yourself have a little distance when you need it. We all need our quiet time.

The Volcano. It may help to *visualize* your stress. Picture yourself as a volcano. Your stress level is the lava level of your volcano. We tend to realize we are stressed when we are *erupting* - crying, yelling, getting sick, etc. Try to recognize your stress earlier on - when your magma level is just starting to rise. This is an easier time to deal with your stress, or to vent off some steam before an explosion.

Stress is normal and unavoidable, but we can exercise a lot of control over how we deal with it. So, if you learn how to plan ahead and use some of the techniques mentioned here, you can help yourself keep healthier mentally and physically!

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