

If you have any questions, ask your care team.

Recharge and Relax

Managing stress well is one important way to support weight loss or weight maintenance.

Reducing stress

When you feel stress, your body releases stress hormones. Some of these hormones increase appetite and fat storage. If you feel stressed, you may also have trouble focusing on positive behavior change. Stress can even drive you to make unhealthy choices.

When you relax, your body blocks the uptake of stress-related hormones.

Reducing the effects of stress is important for weight management. You can do this by:

- Protecting your time to do enjoyable activities
- Spending time with people you enjoy
- Relaxing

To make changes to your lifestyle to support a healthy weight, you need to focus on it every day. However, only you know which activities drain you and which refresh you. Doing something because you enjoy it, not because you feel obligated to do it, helps reduce the risk for things like heart disease and stroke. Taking time to enjoy life is not a luxury; it is necessary for your health and well-being.

Build a social network

Doing things you enjoy by yourself is good. Finding a group that also enjoys that activity is even better. For instance, if you enjoy knitting, that is good, but finding a knitting group is even better. Joining groups that meet regularly to enjoy the same things you do gives you the chance to make new and positive social contacts.

Often, when you do not feel like going out is when having a group/activity you are committed to, such as book club or acting class, can help the most. This gets you out the door and gives you a chance to shift the focus from the stress you're experiencing to an activity and people you enjoy. Most of the time you come away feeling less stress, not more stress, for making yourself go. You may find that you do not come home drained because of the effort, but rather refreshed. Social support can also help to reduce stress hormones.

When you join a new group, whether it's knitting club, pottery class or a volunteer organization, give it a fair trial – go of more than a handful of times. If you do not enjoy it, allow yourself the freedom to stop going. This will let you move on from it and try something else until you find activities and people you can connect with. If you do connect with a new group, keep going. This is often where we enjoy ourselves and make social contacts that matter.

Protect your time to do enjoyable activities

Engaging in regular activities and spending time with people you enjoy is an important part of staying healthy. Find a way to add things to your day that you enjoy on a regular basis. **Schedule your life around them rather than trying to fit them into your life.** Here are some ideas:

Take a break

- Take 5 to 10 minutes to sip on a hot beverage
- Take a nap (if you do not have trouble sleeping at night)
- Take a news break
- Take a break from social media
- Take a phone break

Get out

- Go for a hike
- Visit a park
- Visit a museum
- Ride a bike or join a biking group
- Take a walk
- Sit outside
- Plan a picnic
- Plan a weekend getaway
- Drive just to drive

Do something creative

- Color with crayons or colored pencils
- Take up crocheting or knitting, or join a group
- Craft
- Learn a musical instrument or take a group lesson
- Take a pottery class
- Take a painting class
- Try an acting class

- Try a “do-it-yourself” (DIY) project
- Try a new recipe
- Organize a defined space
- Take care of indoor plants

Connect with others

- Call an old friend with whom you’ve lost touch
- Spend time with family
- Volunteer as a scout leader, political or social advocate, or youth sports coach
- Help out at a food bank, faith organization, animal advocacy group or neighborhood group
- Plan a dinner or lunch out with a friend

Laugh and play

- Play with playdough/therapy dough
- Play with your pets
- Watch or listen to comedy
- Plan a game night/go to weekly trivia night
- Do a puzzle
- Do a crossword
- Play a game

Ease your mind

- Practice mindfulness (consider an app)
- Do diaphragmatic breathing
- Practice yoga
- Do something to fill your senses, like burn a scented candle or touch a soft blanket
- Do a body scan meditation

Practice self-care

- Get a massage
- Get a manicure or pedicure
- Take a shower or bath
- Journal

Listen or read

- Pick something from the library
- Read a book for pleasure or join a book club
- Listen to an audiobook
- Listen to a podcast
- Listen to music

- Create a playlist
- Sing to yourself
- Join a choir
- Watch a favorite TV show

Move

- Exercise or join an exercise group
- Dance or take a dance class
- Learn a choreographed dance
- Garden or join a gardening group

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