



COPING WITH STRESS



CANADIAN MENTAL
HEALTH ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE



HEART &
STROKE
FOUNDATION

Did you know?

- Stress is a risk factor for heart disease and stroke.
- Almost one quarter of Canadians report a high degree of life stress.
- No matter where you live, the pressures of everyday life can have an impact on your wellbeing.
- When it's not possible to avoid excessive stress, you need a strategy.

This booklet will help you understand and manage stress in your life.

PART 1

- 1 What is stress?
- 2 Test your stress index
- 3 Understanding stress
- 4 The stress response
- 5 Stress response stages
- 7 Preventing stress

PART 2

- 9 Coping with stress
- 19 Resources to help you cope with stress





PART 1

WHAT IS STRESS?

“I am so stressed!”

How often have you heard someone say that? How many times have you felt stressed yourself? No matter who you are or how you live, the pressures of everyday life can have an impact on your well-being. Stress is a fact of life.

But what is stress? Is it always harmful, or can it also lead you forward on your life journey?

You could say there is “good” and “bad” stress. Good stress can be managed. It stimulates and helps you achieve balance in all the responsibilities of your life. You can handle good stress.

Bad stress may cause you to feel out of control. It can make you break out in a cold sweat. It can make your heart beat furiously. It scares you and makes you feel sick inside. Bad stress is dangerous. It can harm your health and happiness.

Everyone feels stress differently.

What is stressful to you may not concern someone else because no two people respond exactly the same way to a situation.

When you are confronted with a challenging event, you mentally evaluate the situation, searching for ways to resolve your inner conflict. As you try to deal with the event, you mobilize your coping skills. If you find that you can successfully cope with a situation, you don't see it as stressful. If you conclude that the circumstance outweighs your ability to cope, you may move into a “stress response.”

How do you know when stress is helpful or harmful? How can you control your stress response?

Your perceptions, thoughts and actions can make all the difference in turning bad stress into good. By understanding your personality and your reactions to stress-provoking situations, you can learn to cope more effectively.

This booklet will help you understand and manage stress in your life.

TEST YOUR STRESS INDEX

“Look at her. She seems so stressed out.”

Sometimes, it's easier to recognize stress in others than in yourself. You may have learned to endure rather than overcome emotional chaos caused by stress. Problems may be difficult to recognize because they have become so familiar. That can make your daily life miserable and negatively impact your physical health, sometimes drastically. Yet you may not be aware or willing to admit that you are under stress.

This quiz will help you test your stress index.

DO YOU FREQUENTLY:	YES/NO		YES/NO
Neglect your diet?		Use sleeping pills or tranquilizers without consulting a doctor?	
Try to do everything yourself?		Not get enough rest?	
Blow up easily?		Get angry when you are kept waiting?	
Seek unrealistic goals?		Ignore stress symptoms in your habits and attitudes?	
Fail to see the humour in situations others find funny?		Put things off until later?	
Act rude?		Think there is only one right way to do something?	
Make a “big deal” of everything?		Fail to include relaxation time in your day?	
Look to other people to make things happen?		Gossip?	
Have difficulty making decisions?		Impatiently try to race through your day?	
Complain you are disorganized?		Spend a lot of time complaining about your past?	
Avoid people whose ideas contradict your own?		Fail to get a break from noise and crowds?	
Bottle up everything inside?			
Avoid or neglect physical activity?			
Have few or no supportive relationships?			

Score 1 for each “YES” answer.

TOTAL YOUR SCORE _____

WHAT YOUR SCORE MEANS

1-6: You have few hassles, and generally lead a low-stress life. That's great! But, don't spend so much energy avoiding problems that you shy away from challenges.

7-13: You've got a handle on your life. Though you're in good control, try to improve choices and habits that might still cause some unnecessary stress. You'll find useful advice in this booklet.

14-20: Warning: You're in the danger zone! Even now you're probably suffering stress-related symptoms. Take time out every day to look at choices you've made and reflect on outcomes. The suggestions in this booklet will enable you to take better control of your life.

Above 20: Red flag emergency! Stop. Re-think. Change your lifestyle. Improve your diet. Make physical activity a regular routine, and above all, try to find ways to relax. Is it running? Knitting? Spending time with your kids? Try to positively alter your attitudes. Use this booklet to help guide you to live a healthier, happier life. You may also wish to speak to your healthcare provider for some additional help.

Understanding stress

"I really don't think I have too much stress, but sometimes it just feels so hard to deal with everything."

To cope effectively, you need to recognize stress and how it affects you. Examine the causes of your stress, your thoughts, how you feel about it and how you respond.

Watch out for stressors!

Stress-provoking situations are called "stressors." They come at you from all directions, almost all the time. Major events, such as moving, leaving school, changing jobs or experiencing losses can provoke stress. Routine events also contribute to your stress level – everyday hassles like traffic snarls, work pressures or family responsibilities. Your attitude determines how you deal with these situations.

The stress response

“When I’m in crisis mode, look out.
You never know what will happen.”

Being aware of how you respond to stressors is the first step in a successful coping strategy. When you decide that something is causing you stress, you may instinctively resort to your body’s “fight or flight” reaction. This causes a release of adrenaline, a natural body chemical, and starts the initial stage of your stress response.

You may respond to this in your own way. You may experience physical signs such as muscle tension and difficulty sleeping (insomnia). Or you may react emotionally with outbursts of crying or anger.

Next time you’re feeling stressed, look for your personal stress signs. They are your clue that you need to do something to reduce the impact.



STRESS STOPPER:

STRESS STRETCH

Take a break! Relax. Close your eyes. Try to clear your mind. Stretch away your stress.

Muscle tension is a common sign of stress. Tension often centres in your neck and jaw. You can relieve this symptom effectively when you feel it. Gently and slowly move your head from front to back, side to side, and in a full circle. Stretch your mouth open, slowly moving your lower jaw from side to side and front to back. (If this activity causes pain, or if you have had any injuries to your back, neck or jaw, check with your healthcare provider first).

STRESS RESPONSE STAGES

Stressors can cause you to experience any or all of the following stages:

Stage 1: Mobilization of energy

Your body reacts to a sudden, frightening stressor such as a near-car accident – this is “primary stress.” Or, you can deliberately enter a stressful situation, such as the night before your wedding – this is “secondary stress.” In either case, the following symptoms may develop:

- your heart rate increases
- you breathe rapidly, in short gasps
- you experience a cold sweat
- you have “butterflies” in your stomach – indigestion or no appetite
- you feel dizzy or light-headed

Stage 2: Consumption energy

If you can't get relief from Stage 1, your body will begin to release stored sugars and fats, consuming vital resources. As a result, you may:

- feel driven and under pressure
- become exhausted to the point of fatigue
- overeat or have a poor diet
- experience anxiety or tension
- have difficulty concentrating

- suffer illnesses, such as colds and flu
- increase unhealthy habits, such as smoking, excessive alcohol or food consumption or increased coffee drinking

Stage 3: Exhaustion

If your stress remains unresolved, it can become chronic. Your body's need for energy resources is greater than its ability to produce them. You could develop a serious illness such as:

- heart disease
- stroke
- high blood pressure
- mental illness (depression)

Or, you may experience symptoms such as:

- insomnia (difficulty sleeping)
- errors in judgement
- personality changes

Effects on your health

“I haven’t felt good in days. I’m just so tired all the time. It feels like stress is wearing me down.”

Too much stress may lead to poor health. High stress levels can make you tense or anxious, cause headaches, stomach ailments or symptoms that mimic old illnesses.

You may resort to unhealthy coping methods. You may drink too much alcohol, abuse drugs, eat poorly, and blame others (possibly a spouse or parent). Extreme cases can lead to physical violence, most often with family members.

Chronic stress can lead to mental health issues like anxiety – ranging from chronic, uncontrollable worry to severe panic attacks – or even depression.

Untreated clinical depression leads to suicide in 15% of cases. If you can’t shake depression, seek medical help!

Want to learn more about depression, anxiety and other mental illnesses? Contact your local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association. Visit cmha.ca for the nearest location.

Heart disease and stroke

Stress can have deadly consequences. It’s a risk factor for heart disease and stroke. About a quarter of Canadians report a high degree of life stress. People with excessive stress may have:

- high blood pressure
- elevated levels of LDL or “bad” cholesterol
- obesity
- diabetes
- blood platelets that are more likely to clot (clump together inside the blood vessel)

Being aware of your stressors and knowing how to deal with them effectively will enable you to get on the right track to a healthier lifestyle.

Need to know more about heart disease and stroke?

Visit heartandstroke.ca or contact the Heart and Stroke Foundation at 1-888-HSF-INFO (473-4636).

PREVENTING STRESS

“My best method of preventing stress is to live healthy and to try to avoid things that cause it.”

Consider these basic strategies to prevent or avoid stress in your daily life. They may seem simple but they can be challenging to implement! Use these ideas on their own or with other coping skills discussed in this booklet.

1. Just say no.

Don't get overwhelmed trying to please everyone all the time. Instead, set realistic personal goals with enough time to achieve them. Prioritize your activities. Learn to say no to things that are not a high priority.

2. Stop procrastinating – take action.

If you believe you perform better under pressure, you may be trying to convince yourself that you do. In fact, you may be making an excuse to procrastinate. Putting things off can be stressful. Instead, take action. Make decisions and be prepared to live with the consequences.

3. Get help when you need it.

No matter how proud or strong you are, there is no shame in asking for help when you need it. By not asking for help, you may be needlessly stressed. Sometimes it's best to delegate, asking others to lighten your load by doing tasks they can handle.

**STRESS STOPPER:****TAKE A COMEDY BREAK –
LAUGH AT STRESS**

“Have you heard the one about...?”

Laughter is your body’s natural stress-release mechanism. Make sure it’s working for you. Take a comedy break whenever you need one. Watch a comedy on TV, DVD or at the movies. Keep a show or a book that you know makes you laugh on hand for stress emergencies. Read the daily comics in the newspaper. Life’s no joke if you can’t find the humour in it.

**STRESS STOPPER:****TAKE A BREAK – WALK AWAY FROM STRESS**

“Sometimes I just need to get away from it all for a little while—to clear my head and recharge my batteries.”

Forget having another coffee on your break. Walk off your stress instead. Physical activity relieves stress and walking energizes your body and spirit. If you prefer not to walk alone, join or form a walking club with co-workers or friends.



COPING WITH STRESS

“Sure, I know what to do about stress—
deal with it!”

There is no single right way to cope with every situation. Part 2 of this booklet includes information about support and resources for developing your coping skills (see page 23).

To make the most of that information, you need to understand your stress cycle and how to control your stress response. The first step is to know yourself and understand your personal coping style. There are three accepted styles. You may use one or a combination of all three, whatever works for you

TASK-ORIENTED: You feel comfortable analyzing the stressor and taking appropriate, positive action to deal directly with the situation.

EMOTION-ORIENTED: You prefer to deal with your feelings and find social supports.

DISTRACTION-ORIENTED: You use external sources such as music or physical activity to take your mind off your predicament.



STRESS STOPPER:

Unrealistic goals that seem out of reach add to your stress. Try setting a personal goal using the **SMART** approach.

SPECIFIC	Choose one small goal and write it down.
MEASURABLE	Can you count it or check it off a list?
ACHIEVABLE	Is your goal realistic? If not, make it smaller
REWARDED	Decide how to reward yourself when you reach your goal.
TIME-LIMITED	Set a specific, realistic date to finish or achieve your goal.

TAKE THE PRESSURE OFF, REDUCE YOUR STRESS

“When life catches up to me, I know all I have to do is stop chasing it. But, sometimes I can’t seem to run fast enough to get ahead of it all.”

When it’s not possible to avoid excessive stress, you need a strategy. This section is about finding your anti-stress strategies. Some offer you temporary relief while others help you determine the cause.

Before you decide which coping skills to use in a situation, ask yourself three questions:

Is my coping response suitable in this situation?

Physical activity may calm you, but it may not be appropriate in a job interview. A breathing exercise might be the right response.

Is my coping response positive?

Not all ways to relieve stress are good for you. Drugs and alcohol are obvious coping strategies with dangerous side effects. Even healthy options, such as physical activity or dieting, can be bad in extremes. Moderation is the key.

Is my coping response going to help me in the long run?

Big problems require more than short-term solutions. Ten minutes of slow breathing might help you deal with a stressful moment at work, but it won’t change your job or the stress that goes with it. Instead, talking it out with a friend or trusted colleague may help you find solutions to your problems.

There are three basic types of coping skills – physical/behavioural skills, cognitive/mental skills, and personal/social skills. All three types are useful to help you deal with stress in your life. Some may be more or less attractive depending on your particular circumstance.

Physical/Behavioural Coping Skills

Physical/behavioural skills involve taking care of yourself and staying as healthy as possible. Here are some examples of things you can do to help relieve stress.

Physical activity

Physical activity can clear your mind, reduce tension and increase energy. Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines recommend that adults accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of ten minutes or more. For example, walking can help by providing energy as well as a relaxing change of environment. Organized activities (team sports, aerobics classes and bicycling clubs) offer both exercise and social interaction that may help to buffer stress.

Yoga and stretching

Yoga and slow stretching – even just 5 to 10 minutes a day – also promote relaxation to reduce stress. First, choose a body part to stretch.

1. As you stretch, think about the area being stretched; imagine the tension leaving as you gently take these areas to their comfortable limit.
2. Exhale into the stretch; inhale on the release. Breathe deeply and slowly – do not hold your breath.
3. Close your eyes for better awareness of your body's responses.



Eat a healthy diet

“I just don’t have time to eat balanced meals. I am always on the go.”

Your body can only run on the fuel you give it. Junk in means junk out. A diet full of caffeine, sugar, and fat can make you feel restless, agitated, and sluggish. It will also erode your stress response.

Canada’s Food Guide recommends a well-balanced diet rich in vegetables, fruit, whole grains, low-fat dairy and alternatives, and lean meat and alternatives. Limit salt, sugar, saturated and trans fat intake. **To learn more about Canada’s Food Guide visit healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide**

Get a good rest

“When I lay down at night, I just can’t seem to shut my brain off. I toss and turn, replaying my day in my head until it’s time to do it all over again.”

Can’t sleep? Then get up. Don’t even try to sleep if your body won’t let you. Clock watching, tossing and turning will only make you tense, and that means stress. Instead, relax in a comfortable chair. Read a book, watch television or play solitaire. Before you know it, you’ll be dozing off. Even if you don’t actually fall asleep, you will be more relaxed. Reducing your anxiety about not sleeping will ultimately make it easier to sleep.

Relaxation exercises

Kick back. Let your mind take a break. You may want to set aside some time each day to unwind. Relaxing may take many forms, but one of the most popular is breathing exercises.

Exhalation breathing

Slow your breathing to help calm you down. Do this exercise for 10 minutes or more – it's up to you.

1. Lie on your back with your arms at your sides.

2. As you begin to breathe in, raise your arms toward the ceiling (elbows bent). Move your arms all the way up and over your head to the floor as you inhale.

3. Reverse the order: breathe out slowly and smoothly as you return your arms to your sides.

Repeat this motion several times. Then slowly inhale and exhale without moving your arms. Relax; enjoy the sense of peace it brings.

Deep breathing

“Sometimes I get so busy that I forget to take a breath!”

Deep breathing is great as it can be done anytime, anywhere. Breathing deeply increases oxygen flow in your blood. Your body releases endorphins, naturally occurring hormones that re-energize and promote relaxation. Do this exercise for three to five minutes whenever you feel tense.

1. Slowly inhale through your nose, expanding your abdomen before allowing air to fill your lungs.

2. Reverse the process as you exhale.

Cognitive/Mental Coping Skills:

“It was so stressful for me to be there. I don’t know how people can live like that day after day.”

How you perceive or interpret events relates to how stressful (or non-stressful) you’ll find them. Cognitive/mental coping skills involve using your thoughts and mind constructively to counteract negative effects of stress. The activities below offer a few ways of coping.

Problem solving

“I hate being overwhelmed. That’s when I really push the panic button. There is nothing more stressful for me than when I can’t get control of a situation.”

When faced with a stressful circumstance, many of us become overwhelmed and panic. Don’t let the pressure get you down! Remember, every problem has at least one good solution. Sometimes you just need to employ classic problem-solving skills. Try following these steps to avoid a stressful situation:

1. Write down a list of every possible solution to your problem or way of dealing with your stressful situation.

2. Rank the solutions in order of feasibility and effectiveness.

3. Put your top-ranked solution into action.

4. Assess whether it solved your problem. If it did, great! If not, then select the next solution on the list and see if that works, and so on.

Reappraisal

“I know it doesn’t seem like such a big thing now, but when it happened, I just fell apart. I didn’t know how to handle it.”

Sometimes your interpretation of a stressor can magnify its impact, making it feel more stressful than it really is. Follow these simple steps to ensure you have not blown the situation out of proportion.

STEP 1: Identify your thoughts about the predicament.

- What am I saying to myself about this situation?

STEP 2: Challenge your thoughts about the circumstance.

- Is what I’m feeling realistic? Am I grounded in fact, not fear?

STEP 3: Reappraise your position.

- How can I change my thinking to reflect more realistically on this condition?

Meditation

“When I meditate, I am able to calm my worries.”

Meditation can help to settle your mind, allowing you to think more calmly. It also puts you in charge of your psyche by making you live in the moment and observe your thought processes. This is not a quick fix. Meditation requires patience and stamina. If you make it a habit, you will reap its benefits.

Start by meditating for 10 to 15 minutes once or twice a day. Increase this to 20 minutes no more than twice a day. Avoid meditating just before going to bed or you might be too energized to sleep.

There are several meditation techniques so it's best to do research if you are interested in learning methods other than this one.

1. Choose a quiet room where you won't be interrupted.
2. Take time to relax; don't rush into it.
3. When you are thoroughly relaxed and breathing slowly and evenly, close your eyes. You may wish to slowly repeat a pleasant-sounding word such as peace or harmony, also known as a mantra, over and over in your mind as you breathe in and out. Continue in this state for 10 to 20 minutes.
4. To come back: Pay attention to your breathing. Be aware of your body and your posture. You may wish to say your mantra out loud, deliberately and slowly. Open your eyes and look around the room. After a minute or so, stand up and stretch.

With practice, you will eventually reach the point when you'll feel detached from your body and your physical surroundings while meditating. You'll be in touch with your innermost self, thoroughly relaxed and energized.

NOTE: Meditation can be overdone to the point where you are completely cut off from feelings of anxiety. This isn't healthy. Everyone needs a certain amount of stress in order to function.

Personal/Social Coping Skills

“When I’m having fun, stress is the farthest thing from my mind. I can really let go and enjoy myself with no worries.”

Life should be a pleasure. One of the best ways to beat stress is to make happiness a priority. Too often we get so caught up in our work and routines that we feel empty, isolated, and unfulfilled. Take a time out! Make an extra effort to experience the good in your life. Seek out things that make you happy and that matter most to you.

You can do this in many ways.

- Spend quality leisure time with your friends and family.
- Explore your spirituality.
- Develop your hobbies and personal interests. Consider it “nourishment for your soul.”
- Enjoy nature and outings. Go for a walk in a park, enjoy the trees and birds – get away from the hustle of daily life. Whether you have a backyard or live in an apartment, consider the soothing quality of tending plants and watching them grow.
- Give to others. Volunteering can be rewarding and satisfying. Helping others helps divert attention from yourself and can reduce your anxiety.
- Take a vacation or a break from your normal routine. But make sure it is a holiday for your spirit too. A vacation is only refreshing when it doesn’t add stress. Plan ahead and don’t try to pack too much into the time available.



PART 2

RESOURCES TO HELP YOU COPE WITH STRESS

FINDING HELP

“Sometimes when I’m feeling depressed, anxious, confused or unable to cope, I talk to people who can help.”

Finding the right help for stress can itself be a stressful experience. Here is an outline of the kinds of help you can find.

Counselling

Friends, family members, and support groups can often provide a sympathetic ear. But if that isn’t enough, you should seek professional counselling. While counselling may not be the answer to all your problems, it can help you sort things out so that you feel more able to cope.

It’s how we think, or react, that makes us feel over-stressed. Talking to someone can help.

Your family doctor

Stress is a health problem, so your family doctor can help. A thorough review of your health profile and a complete medical examination can pinpoint reasons for your ill health (mental or physical).

Your doctor may prescribe a treatment or refer you to a mental-health specialist. If your family doctor suggests you use medication, make sure you are well informed about how it works and any potential side effects before you decide to use it. Your doctor might also refer you to a psychiatrist or psychologist who may work in a hospital or have a private practice.

Psychotherapy

Psychologists, some psychiatrists and social workers practise psychotherapy. There are many different theories and schools of thought regarding effective psychotherapy techniques. It is vital that you talk to your therapist to make sure you are comfortable with the approach.

Always check to ensure your health-care professional has a valid licence to practice.

The psychiatrist

Psychiatrists complete a medical degree plus an additional four years training in diagnosis and treatment of emotional and behavioural problems. Because they are medical doctors, psychiatrists are licensed to prescribe medications. Their fees are covered by your provincial health-care plan.

To see a psychiatrist, ask your family doctor for a referral. If you have no family doctor, call a local hospital or community health centre to ask about available mental health services. You can also call the local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association to ask about finding a psychiatrist.

The psychologist

A clinically trained psychologist holds a doctorate (PhD) or a Masters in the study of human behaviour, as well as in the treatment of behavioural and emotional problems. Some psychologists specialise in stress management. A psychologist may not be able to bill your provincial health insurance plan. However, many private health-care insurance plans cover the services of registered psychologists. Check with your insurance company.

The social worker

A social worker has a university degree in social work. Some have taken additional training in psychotherapy. Most are employed by hospitals or community agencies while some are in private practice. Your doctor may refer you to a therapist who is a social worker.

OTHER COUNSELLING SERVICES

The public health nurse

Public health nurses are involved with individual, family and small group counselling, and education regarding personal health. They often work with hospitals, local doctors and neighbourhood centres.

Public health nurses can help you with information about how your lifestyle relates to your stress level. They can also guide you to health-related resources in your community.

Contact a public health nurse through your local department of health.

Employee and family assistance program counselling

An Employee/Family Assistance Program (EAP/EFAP) can provide confidential short-term counselling and information to help you deal with personal, work-related, marital, family, stress, addiction and financial matters. Review your benefits information or ask your supervisor or HR department if you have an EAP/EFAP, since it is provided as an employee benefit by many organizations.

Addiction counselling

Are you using alcohol, tranquilizers or other drugs to mask your symptoms of stress? If so, you need to find people who can help you. Talk to your doctor. Look up your local chapter of Alcoholics Anonymous (a self-help group) or an addiction foundation or centre in your area.

Individual and family counselling

In many communities, a family services organization or community centre offers individual or family counselling. Check with your local community information centre or your local branch of the Canadian Mental Health Association for information about services in your area.

Financial counselling

If money is the root of your stress, find help through a credit counselling service. These services provide counselling for people with credit difficulties. Some counsellors act on your behalf to deal with agencies or people to whom you owe money. Look in the yellow pages for credit or financial counselling and planning.

Self-help groups

Sometimes, true understanding can only come from someone who has been in your situation and has experienced the same type of problem and overcome it. You can find support and solace in many self-help groups (also called mutual aid groups or support groups). People with similar problems get together to help each other cope. Through the combined strength of the group, you may find what you need to take charge of your own situation.

Membership in a self-help group can be an alternative to professional therapy. You may find that a support group is useful in addition to formal helping services. To find out about self-help groups, contact your local community information service.



Self-help resources

A good way to start to deal with stress in your life is to learn how to overcome it. Websites, books, videos and courses can help you increase your understanding of stress and how to manage it.

a) Websites

The internet has a lot of useful information, but most of it is not regulated and may be poor quality. Visit websites that provide reliable information on stress such as the Canadian Mental Health Association (cmha.ca) or the Public Health Agency of Canada (phac-aspc.gc.ca).

b) Books

Many books claim to help people deal with stress, but not all are written by experts. If you are unsure of a book's credibility, try to borrow a copy from the library or research it online before buying. You can also ask a health care provider for an opinion.

c) Videos

There are some good documentaries and information videos that can increase your understanding of stress and stress management. You can obtain stress-related videos from the internet, via the National Film Board of Canada or at your local library.

d) Courses

Some stress management experts claim to have the only method that works. In reality, there are many effective stress management techniques. Courses on stress management and related topics are often offered by private companies and not-for-profit organizations such as community colleges. It is important to check the qualifications of anyone who is leading such courses.

Evaluating counselling and educational services and resources

The majority of counselling and educational services and resources associated with stress are competent and ethical. But some are not. Make sure you deal only with credible services. Be sure to ask the following questions before becoming involved with a service or buying a resource:

1. What are the qualifications of the leader of the sessions or the author of the book?

2. What will take place in a typical session?

3. How long will each session be and how many sessions are there?

4. What if I want to stop the sessions?

5. What is the cost of the service? Is it covered by my provincial health-care plan or my private insurance?

6. How does the organization or individual ensure that confidentiality is respected?

Avoid the following:

1. An organization whose contact person will not answer questions clearly or to your satisfaction.

2. When your involvement is due to pressure from a third party.

3. If you are promised money as a reward for participating.

4. If you are asked to sign a document that might compromise your civil rights such as testimonials or contracts with fixed obligations.

5. If success is "guaranteed."

"I joined this group to get help, but things are not working out."

If this is your situation, a number of critical things may be happening. You might not be ready to accept a problem or focus on its solution. Or, it may be because you have chosen a resource that's not right for you.

If you have a helping person who:

- doesn't give you time to explain your problem,
- doesn't seem to hear you, or
- suggests something you feel is inappropriate,

Consider seeking a second opinion or a different kind of helping resource.

Help is out there!
Don't give up.
Finding the right help
to cope with your
stress may require a
few attempts to find a
good fit for you.

Newspapers provide listings of great activities that may be free-of-charge.

Recreation departments often have listings of local events and programs.

Libraries lend books, films, videos, CDs and art.

Community and neighbourhood centres can offer a wide range of community resources geared to the special needs of different age groups, including a variety of free or low-cost programs, leisure activities, sports, exercise classes and general health courses.

Special interest and hobby clubs ranging from model airplane building to bridge playing can be found in the special events listings in local newspapers or the bulletin board in community centres and libraries.

Community colleges may offer a range of courses in leisure-related or special interest areas.

Boards of education or school boards may sponsor evening and weekend programs, ranging from woodworking and crafts to swimming, dance, aerobics, and yoga. Call the continuing education department of your local board of education or school board.

The YWCA and YMCA offer fitness, health, and recreation programs at centres across the country.

The Heart and Stroke Foundation and the Canadian Mental Health Association are here to help you. Both organizations have a wealth of information that might be helpful to you.

Heart and Stroke Foundation chapters and Canadian Mental Health Association branches are located in many communities across Canada. We have pamphlets and other educational resources, free of charge.

To locate the chapter or branch closest to you, check your telephone book or contact the Division in your province (see the Division lists at the end of this booklet).

Keep this booklet handy. It's a great start to reducing your stress.

Heart and Stroke Foundation Offices

British Columbia & Yukon

1212 West Broadway
Vancouver BC V6H 3V2
604-736-4404

Alberta, N.W.T. & Nunavut

100 - 119 14 Street NW
Calgary AB T2N 1Z6
403-264-5549

Saskatchewan

279 - 3rd Avenue North
Saskatoon SK S7K 2H8
306-244-2124

Manitoba

6 Donald Street, Suite 200
Winnipeg MB R3L 0K6
204-949-2000

Ontario

2300 Yonge Street, Suite 1300
P.O. Box 2414
Toronto ON M4P 1E4
416-489-7111

Québec

1434 Sainte-Catherine Street West,
Suite 500
Montréal QC H3G 1R4
514-871-1551

New Brunswick

133 Prince William Street, Suite 606
Saint John NB E2L 2B5
506-634-1620

Nova Scotia

Park Lane Mall – Level 3
5657 Spring Garden Rd., Box 245
Halifax NS B3J 3R4
902-423-7530

Prince Edward Island

180 Kent Street
P.O. Box 279
Charlottetown PEI C1A 7K4
902-892-7441

Newfoundland and Labrador

P.O. Box 670
1037 Topsail Road
Mount Pearl NF A1N 2X1
709-753-8521

Canada

222 Queen Street, Suite 1402
Ottawa ON K1P 5V9
613-569-4361

1-888-HSF-INFO

(473-4636)

Disease and lifestyle
information resources
website:

heartandstroke.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association

Web-site: cmha.ca

National Office

595 Montreal Road, Suite 303
Ottawa, ON K1K 4L2
613-745-7750

British Columbia Division

1200-1111 Melville Street
Vancouver BC V6E 3V6
604-688-3234
cmha.bc.ca

Alberta Division

328 Capital Place,
9707 – 110th Street NW
Edmonton AB T5K 2L9
780-482-6576
alberta.cmha.ca

Saskatchewan Division

2702 – 12th Avenue
Regina SK S4T 1J2
306-525-5601
cmhask.com

Manitoba Division

100 – 4 Fort Street
Winnipeg MB R3C 1C4
204-953-2350
manitoba.cmha.ca

Ontario Division

180 Dundas Street West, Suite 2301
Toronto ON M5G 1Z8
416-977-5580
ontario.cmha.ca

Quebec Division

911 Jean Talon East, Suite 326
Montreal QC H2R 1V5
514-849-3291
acsm.qc.ca

New Brunswick Division

403 Regent Street, Suite 202
Fredericton NB E3B 3X6
506-455-5231
nb.cmha.ca

Nova Scotia Division

63 King Street
Dartmouth NS B2Y 2R7
902-466-6600
novascotia.cmha.ca

Prince Edward Island Division

170 Fitzroy Street, PO Box 785
Charlottetown PE C1A 7L9
902-566-3034
cmha.pe.ca

Newfoundland and Labrador Division

70 The Boulevard
St. John's NL A1A 1K2
709-753-8550
cmhanl.ca

Northwest Territories Division

PO Box 2580
5102-50th Avenue Suite 204
Yellowknife NT X1A 2P9
867-873-3190



CANADIAN MENTAL
HEALTH ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE
POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

The Canadian Mental Health Association is a nation-wide, charitable organization that promotes the mental health of all and supports the resilience and recovery of people experiencing mental illness.

To find out more about mental health visit cmha.ca or contact the CMHA branch in your community.

Millions of Canadians will develop some form of heart disease or stroke over their lifetime - and some at a much too early age. As a leading funder of heart and stroke research in Canada, the Heart and Stroke Foundation continues to find the answers that lead to earlier diagnoses, better treatments and new insights into how to prevent and manage these diseases. To protect your health and the health of those you love, the Foundation also provides the most up-to-date healthy living information to Canadians, based on the most current, evidence-based research.



HEART &
STROKE
FOUNDATION

To find out more about Heart and Stroke Foundation prevention or disease-related information, and to learn how you can offer much-needed support in your community, visit

heartandstroke.ca

or call

1-888-HSF-INFO (473-4636)

This publication *Coping with Stress* is for informational purposes only and is not intended to be considered or relied upon as medical advice or a substitute for medical advice, a medical diagnosis or treatment from a physician or qualified healthcare professional. You are responsible for obtaining appropriate medical advice from a physician or other qualified healthcare professional prior to acting upon any information available through this publication.