

Managing stress in uncertain times

Everybody gets stressed sometimes. But recent events have been something altogether new, and the impact on our lives continues months after the pandemic first unfolded.

Stress is unpleasant, but if prolonged it also can have a serious impact on physical health, causing symptoms from nausea and headache to insomnia, shortness of breath and increased heart rate. It can even lead to worsening of chronic health conditions.

There are many ways to try to combat stress—some big, some small. To lessen the stress you may be feeling, try some of these tips.



There are many ways,
big and small,
to combat stress

Stay informed, but not too informed

It's important to stay informed on the latest developments, so pick two or three news sources you trust and check in with them regularly. Make sure one of them is local, since the national press can't keep up with every development at the local level.

Consider limiting your exposure to social media, which might be flooded with the anxieties of all your friends. Check in once or twice a day but try not to over-do it.

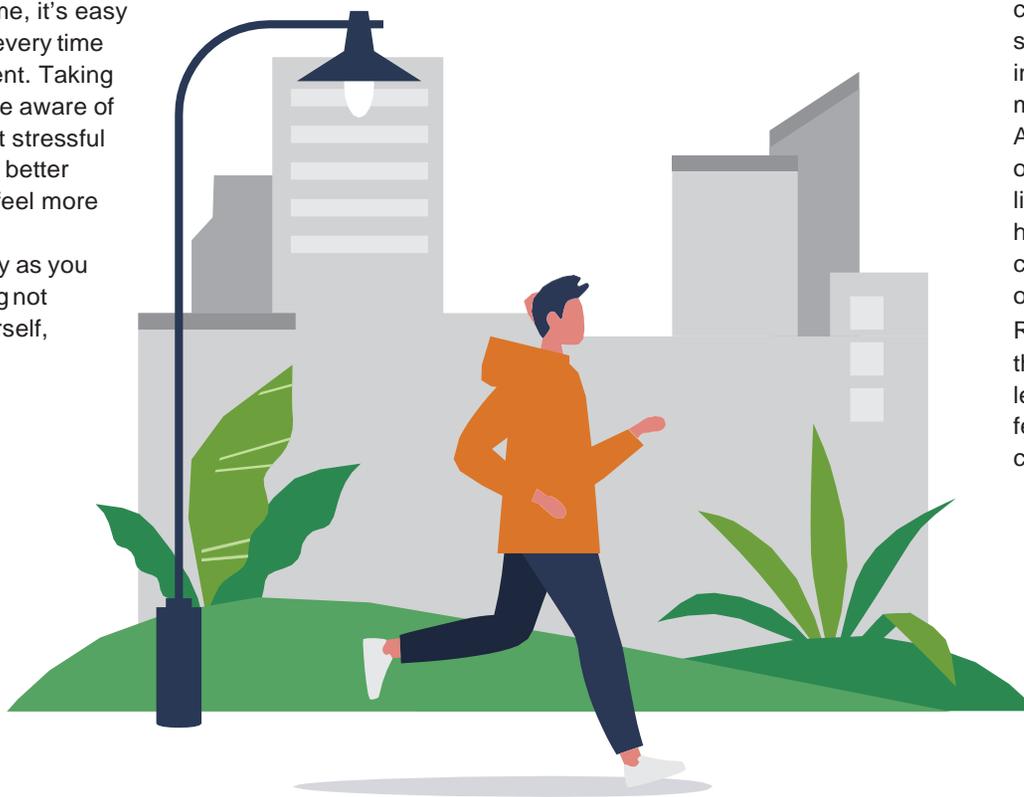
This philosophy holds true for financial and economic news as well. If you have a well-defined investing plan targeted to your individual goals and financial situation, you can focus on the long-term instead of getting stressed out by day-to-day market fluctuation.

Take control in small ways

It may be difficult to focus on taking care of yourself when the things you worry about are so far out of your control. So, try to take control in small ways:

- It may not seem like it, but there actually are a lot of things you can control in this crisis. The best ways to avoid getting sick are all completely under your control: follow government advice and wear a mask if necessary; wash your hands; try to keep your hands away from your face; cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze; maintain that social distance; and clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.
- Be mindful of your choices. If you're working from home, it's easy to wander to the fridge every time you have a spare moment. Taking a minute to pause and be aware of the choices you make at stressful times can help you take better care of yourself — and feel more in control.
- Cook and eat as healthily as you can. It can be comforting not only to take care of yourself, but your family as well.

- Exercise can be a great stress reliever. If you have outdoor space take your workout outside. Just be sure to keep the recommended distance from others. And while you're outside, be mindful and try to stay in the moment; feel the sun on your skin and the breeze in your hair. Breathe it all in.
- Consider video workouts as well. There are many online classes to choose from, whatever your fitness level.



Reach out to others

Personal relationships are incredibly important to mental health, and that makes social distancing especially difficult.

- Don't just text your friends. Call and talk to them and use video if you can. If permitted arrange outdoor catch ups - a walk together or a picnic.
- Contact neighbours who are older or alone and find out if they need anything. Perhaps you can make a run to the supermarket for them or walk their dog.
- People are endlessly creative, and it's really showing in how they interact socially when they must keep at a distance. Artists have been hosting online tutorials; musicians have been performing live from their kitchens; and companies have hosted virtual dance parties. Virtual happy hour continues to be a thing. Be creative; there are lots of ways to find community online. Remember to take things at your own pace. With things starting to reopen everyone has a different level of comfort with getting back to 'normal', don't feel pressured into activities you aren't yet comfortable with.



Be cool, calm, collected

It really pays to be emotionally resilient in periods of high stress and anxiety. Resilient people tend to be optimistic and calm and have a sense of purpose in their life, but even they are feeling stressed during this time. If these qualities don't come naturally to you, you may be able to nurture them or seek out people and spaces where it's easier to:

- Remind yourself of what matters most to you and practice gratitude for all the good things.
- Breathe. Yes, it can be that simple. Inhale and exhale slowly, focusing on your breath. If you have more time, consider trying mindfulness meditation.
- Lower your standards! It has been a tough time for everyone. You won't be perfect and if you expect perfection, you will never be satisfied—and will always be stressed. Give yourself a break.
- Avoid too much negativity. We're all worried, but you can limit how much you talk about it, and how much you listen.
- Be forgiving. Everyone is dealing with a lot of emotions — their own and, in many cases, their children's — and reactions can be quick and unfiltered.

This information is intended to be educational and is not tailored to the investment needs of any specific investor.
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Reach out for help

The stress you're experiencing isn't all in your head. It's very real. If you find it impacting your health or relationships, or you've tried to reduce it without success, consider calling your doctor.

You may be able to use online tools from the NHS or mental health charities such as MIND and you may also be able to contact your Employee Assistance Program for help.

