

Coping Strategies

The stress response is your body's way of letting you know that you need to adapt to changes in your environment. Learning how to effectively manage the stress response can help you build resiliency. Below are some strategies that can help you improve your mood and your ability to problem-solve:

How do you know when you're experiencing the stress response?

Consider your thoughts, emotions, behaviours, and physical symptoms.

Addressing the Stress Response:

1. **Reframe the stress response:** "My body and brain are getting me ready to face this challenge. I am getting ready for an important task."
2. **Identify the source of your stress response:** "Why am I feeling this stress response?"
3. **Make a plan:** Use past experiences or brainstorm new ways to approach a difficult situation. Discuss the situation with friends and family and ask for help, if needed.
4. **Apply your solutions to the problem.**

For example:

- If academics are the source of your stress response, access support and resources to develop your learning strategies:
www.learningcommons.ubc.ca.
- Feel like you have too much to do and don't know where to start? Consider your approach to how you are managing your time:
www.learningcommons.ubc.ca/student-toolkits/managing-your-time.

There are also things you can do on a daily basis to help you feel ready to face the various challenges in school, work, and life:

Take Care of the Basics:

- **Focus on getting enough sleep.**
- **Fuel up on healthy foods.**
- **Exercise** – walk, stretch, go to the gym, dance, or try yoga.

Make Time to Unwind:

- **Create art or write** – draw, journal, write poetry or a compassionate letter to yourself.
- **Curl up on a couch with a book.**
- **Enjoy a hot beverage with a friend or family member.**
- **Listen to comforting music.**
- **Spend time on your favourite course.**
- **Remind yourself of your strengths.**
I'm good at _____
- **Garden** – grow something, bring flowers into your room, visit the UBC farmers market.
- **Humor** – read a funny book, watch a comedy.
- **Muscle relaxation exercises.**
- **Find a quiet, safe space**, e.g. UBC Botanical Gardens or a library where you can relax.

Stay Connected or Get Involved:

- **Call friends or family** when you need to talk.
- **Build a support network** – contact old friends or join an AMS club.
- **Have fun and meet new people by volunteering** in your community through AMS or the Centre for Student Involvement and Careers.
- **Connect with individuals with similar experiences and interests.**



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Reducing your stress response in the moment:

- Try this **Box Breathing** technique. It can help lower your heart rate back to normal, so you feel a little more relaxed. Here's how you do it: *If possible, sit and close your eyes. If not, just focus on your breathing.*
Step 1: Inhale your breath (preferably through your nose) for 4 seconds.
Step 2: Hold your breath for 4 seconds. You're not trying to deprive yourself of air; you're just giving the air a few seconds to fill your lungs.
Step 3: Exhale slowly through your mouth for 4 seconds.
Step 4: Pause for 4 seconds (without speaking) before breathing again.
Repeat this process as many times as you can. Even 30 seconds of deep breathing will help you feel more relaxed and in control.
- UBC has also created some **breathing videos** featuring nature and some notable locations on campus. Check it out: goo.gl/k48FfY
- **Practicing mindfulness** can also reduce the stress response. Apps such as Headspace, Calm, and Insight Timer provide guided or unguided options.

Where to seek more help:

Online Self-help and Proactive Resources

- www.students.ubc.ca/health – has information about how to access mental health support on and off campus as well as lots of helpful resources.
- Empower Me is a mental health service offering counselling in person, by telephone, by video-counselling, or by e-counselling. You can also speak to a life coach about subjects like personal performance, wellbeing, and relationships. Empower Me is available 24/7 and is available free of charge for students who are members of the AMS/GSS Student Health Plan. Call 1 844 741-6389 (toll-free) to be directly connected to the Empower Me Clinical Response Center or visit studentcare.ca for more information.
- www.foundrybc.ca – resources and self-help ideas.
- Mindshift (www.anxietybc.com/mobile-app) is a great app and website; includes relaxation techniques.

After Hours Crisis Help

- Crisis support and suicide prevention – 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) or <https://crisiscentre.bc.ca/>
- Local hospital emergency department.

What are two strategies you would like to try?

1.

2.