

# Managing Stress

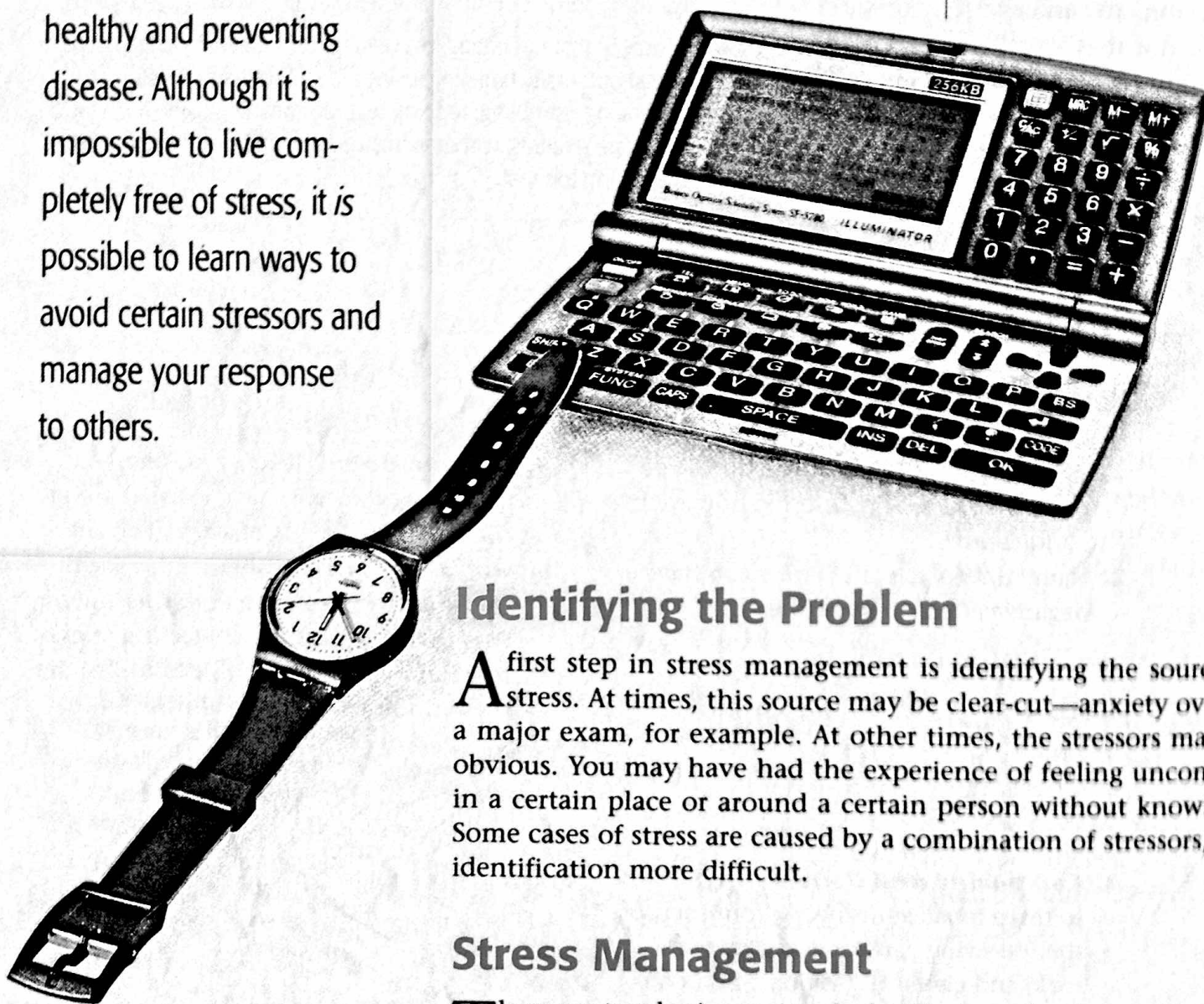
Identifying stressors and managing stress are among the most important steps you can take in staying healthy and preventing disease. Although it is impossible to live completely free of stress, it is possible to learn ways to avoid certain stressors and manage your response to others.

## HEALTH TERMS

**rechanneling**  
**relaxation response**  
**support group**  
**time management skills**  
**priorities**

## HEALTH CONCEPTS

- It is important to identify major stressors in your life.
- You can learn strategies for coping with and managing stress.
- Time management is one effective way to manage stress.



## Identifying the Problem

**A** first step in stress management is identifying the source of the stress. At times, this source may be clear-cut—*anxiety over taking a major exam, for example.* At other times, the stressors may be less obvious. You may have had the experience of feeling uncomfortable in a certain place or around a certain person without knowing why. Some cases of stress are caused by a combination of stressors, making identification more difficult.

## Stress Management

**T**here are two basic ways to deal with stress that is upsetting to you. The first is to eliminate the stressor or reduce your exposure to it. The second is to change the way you perceive or react to the stressor.

Just as your natural instincts for survival tell you to jump out of the way of a vehicle that is speeding toward you, in dealing with stress, you can learn to sense the warning signs that "something is coming." You can then find ways to escape oncoming stressors. Sometimes the best strategy is simply to walk away. At other times, you may be able to "rethink," or get a new perspective on, a stressful situation, making it a learning opportunity instead of a threat.

**Physical activity** is one effective technique for handling stress. Other ways to manage stress include planning, rechanneling energy, relaxing, and laughing.

## Planning

People who plan well tend to have less stress. When you plan, you decide in advance what you want, what you need, and what is expected of you so that you can come into situations well prepared. Planning adds to your confidence. If you are prepared for the unexpected, you are also better able to deal with changes, disappointments, frustrations, or delays when they happen, enabling you to keep your stress to a minimum.

**HEALTH**  
*Online*



**H**ow do you react to stressful situations? Learn how to recognize stress and manage it more effectively. At [health.glencoe.com](http://health.glencoe.com) keep a stress diary for three days. What changes could you make to better manage stress?

# Building Health Skills

## Taking Control of Your Day

FOLLOW THESE SUGGESTIONS for better time management, and you'll start to feel as though you control your time instead of time controlling you.



- 1. Set and prioritize goals.** Set specific goals each day. Write "A" next to any goal or task you must achieve, "B" next to any you would like to get done, and "C" for any goal or task that is not important or that can wait.
- 2. Budget your time.** Set regular time slots each day for relaxation techniques, exercise, and sleep. Set deadlines for yourself. Every once in a while, go over your daily schedules for a week and make sure your "time budget" balances work and play, social time and time to yourself, time for self-improvement and time for helping others.
- 3. Learn to say no.** Practice saying no to the little things, then work your way up to the bigger ones. Saying no does not mean being cruel or selfish. It means not spending your energy or time on activities that do not benefit your life or someone else's.
- 4. Slow down.** Make a conscious effort to do ordinary things—talk, walk, and eat—more slowly. When you can, take a break from all schedules. Take off your watch and ignore time—at least for a little while.

## TIME MANAGEMENT



You can reduce stress and find time for a wide array of activities if you plan well. Time management skills, strategies to help you use time effectively and healthfully, can help. One such skill, prioritizing, simply means deciding which tasks are more important than others.

▲ **When you prioritize your tasks, you can make time for the things that bring you the most pleasure.**

**ACTIVITY** *Think of a way to budget your time this week so that you can do one activity you love and usually don't make time for.*

### Rechanneling Energy

Rechanneling means *transferring or redirecting your energies*. You can use pent-up energy in useful ways by turning negative energy into positive actions and thoughts. When you feel stressed, why not use the energy to wash the car or straighten your room? If you are unable to put physical distance between yourself and a stressful situation, find ways to take a mental break. Let your mind wander for a few minutes, listen to soothing music, or simply daydream.

### Relaxing and Laughing

Perhaps nothing restores your state of mind more than relaxation. Taking the time to rest, enjoy yourself, and simply *be* rather than *do* can work wonders for the body and the mind. You can learn specific techniques, too, that offer you deeper rest. The **relaxation response** is a state of deep rest that can be reached if one or more relaxation techniques are practiced regularly. Among these techniques are deep breathing, thinking pleasant thoughts, repetitive exercise, and stretching.

Laughing can instantly relieve some stress. It gets more oxygen moving through the bloodstream and works the muscles of the stomach. When you are finished laughing, your blood pressure is lower and you feel relaxed.

## Seeking Support

**W**hatever stressors you face in life, getting support can help you to deal with them. Talking with individuals you trust is vital. Parents, teachers, coaches, siblings, close friends, clergy, neighbors, or peer helpers can prove to be helpful choices when you need support. A **support group**, *an informal or formal gathering of people who meet and share experiences, feelings, and trust*, can also be helpful.

## Time Management

**F**or many people, stress management requires time management. **Time management skills** are *specific strategies for planning and using time in effective, healthful ways*. One important time management skill is setting priorities. **Priorities** are *those goals, tasks, or activities that you judge as more important to do than others*. When you set priorities, or prioritize, you decide which things you will do in which order, ranking them from most to least important or necessary. Setting priorities can help to organize your day and reduce your stress over what must get done.



## Sweat Your Stress Away

The next time you're tense and don't know what to do about it, start sweating. Whack a tennis ball, run around the neighborhood, go dancing, play soccer, do anything that will keep the big muscles moving and the heart pumping. Exercise will:

- calm you down,
- wake you up,
- make you more alert,
- improve your mood,
- pump up your confidence,
- improve your appearance.