



THE STRESS RESPONSE

You are sometimes unable to choose what happens to you, but it may be possible to choose or manage your response.

When you are stressed, any or all of the following may happen to you:

- Your muscles tighten
- Your heart beats faster
- Your blood pressure rises
- Your breathing becomes shallow
- You perspire more
- Your jaw tightens or clenches
- You have racing thoughts
- You feel angry, frustrated, attacked, threatened or fearful

Managing the stress response

While the above reactions are often involuntary, there are deliberate actions you can choose to manage your response.

The following are some techniques which may help you to control the stress response:

- Taking time to pause before you react or say anything
- Breathing deeply and slowly to help reverse or stop some of these reactions
- Relaxing your muscles by thinking about where the tightness is and releasing it
- Diverting your attention from the stress by focusing on something else (e.g., counting, reading, listening to music)
- Reminding yourself that this will pass
- Sitting quietly until the responses subside
- Allowing yourself the opportunity to understand what your feelings mean for you, rather than trying to simply stop them

If these do not work for you, you may think about seeking help from a health care provider to develop your own strategies to respond to stress.

