



Canadian Mental
Health Association

TALK TODAY

Tips for managing your stress and anxiety during the season

The hockey season always has ups and downs, and balancing hockey and life can be stressful at times. This handout was developed to help individuals learn more about stress and anxiety. It also details some practical tips on how to support your mental health during difficult parts of the season.

REMINDER: For confidential support, you can reach out your local CMHA Mental Health Coach.

What is stress?

Stress is a response to an external situation, such as a tight deadline for a test or having an argument with a family member. These responses can be strong, but they often subside once the situation has passed or been resolved. After that, our system has a chance to self-regulate. Since stress has a direct external cause, tackling these causes head-on can help with our stress response.

What is anxiety?



Anxiety is a common response to a lot of life stressors. It can be beneficial as it draws our attention to things that may be harmful to us. Anxiety is characterized by a persistent feeling of apprehension or dread in situations that are not actually threatening. Anxiety can become a challenge when it begins to disrupt our ability to respond effectively in daily situations.

Managing stress and anxiety

When we're looking at ways to manage stress and anxiety, a good place to start is to identify the situations or signals that trigger stress responses in order to return our bodies to their natural state.



Tips for managing stress

Building a social support system

One of the strongest protective factors against stress is having someone we can reach out to in hard times to face challenges and uncertainties. This might take some time if we have to build our support systems within a new setting, a new culture or a new country.

Encouraging predictability in your routine

When we experience stress, it's often because we feel we don't have a sense of control. Respond to the aspects you can control when a problem arises, and work toward solving the problem in smaller, more manageable pieces. For example, if you missed classes due to being sick, you're likely to feel overwhelmed by the amount of content you need to catch up with. However, if you break down the topics and concepts you have to cover, across a span of time, it may look less daunting to complete.

Developing a gratitude practice

Practicing gratitude can help you focus on the positive and reframe challenges as less of a threat. Writing down the things you're grateful for in a journal can be particularly helpful.

Tips for managing acute stress responses

» Mental rehearsal

Visualize yourself attaining the goal you want to achieve. This might look like picturing yourself scoring a goal or making a big save. This can be helpful for reframing your mindset and providing a new perspective.

» Positive self-talk

Engage in an internal dialogue that supports you in reaching your goal. When people speak to themselves in the third or second person, it can decrease emotional distress. For example, if Alex is stressed about an upcoming game, they may decrease their stress by saying "Alex, you're a capable and talented player, and have played in similar games before that got you to where you are today. You got this."

» Focus on your breathing

Deep belly breathing (breathing from your diaphragm) tells your brain to relax, which can lower your blood pressure and heart rate and help to regulate the physical signs of stress.

Positive stress and resilience

Some people respond to stress with resilience. Resilience is the ability to adapt in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or significant sources of stress. It's not something we inherently have, but it's something we can cultivate and practice.

Eustress is the type of stress we feel when we're excited, and it leaves us feeling confident, motivated and excited about life. It can improve cognitive function – memory, attention span, and assists with productivity. This in turn can help us to stay motivated, work toward goals and feel good about life.

» Seeking support

While it may feel scary at first, reaching out for professional support can be helpful if you're finding daily tasks challenging due to stress and anxiety. They will provide a safe space to speak about your feelings and can provide guidance. For more information on resources available in your community, you can contact your local CMHA Mental Health Coach for confidential guidance on services available.

Need immediate support?

If you're struggling with your mental health and need immediate support, help is available.

» Kids Help Phone «

Kids Help Phone is Canada's only 24-7 e-mental health service offering free, confidential support to young people in English and French - kidshelpphone.ca - Call 1-800-668-6868 or text 686868

» Talk Suicide Canada «

Talk Suicide Canada provides nationwide, 24-hour, bilingual support to anyone who is facing suicide. talksuicide.ca - Call 1-833-456-4566 or text 45645

Keep in mind, the help you seek will stay confidential unless there's an immediate risk of harm. If seeking support by yourself is daunting, asking a trusted friend to be there when you're calling a helpline or scheduling an appointment can help. It can also be hard if you're struggling with stigma, have a fear of being stigmatized, or you aren't used to seeking mental health support. Educating yourself on mental health, showing yourself compassion, talking to people who are open about their own mental health and advocating for yourself are some steps to reduce the stigma.