

Stress Management

Stress management is a decision-making process. When we are feeling the effects of a stressful life position or a stressful lifestyle, we have 3 major ways we could deal with that stress:

Alter it

Avoid it or

Accept it by building our resistance or changing our perception

All 3 of these approaches can be effective coping techniques. The trick is choosing the proper approach for the situation at hand and the person involved.

The first **A** stands for **Alter** which implies removing the source of stress by changing something. Problem-solving, direct communication, organizing, planning and time management are common techniques for altering stress.

The second **A** stands for **Avoid** which implies removing oneself from the stressful situation or figuring out how not to get there in the first place. To conserve stress energy, people sometimes need to walk away, let go, say "no," delegate, withdraw and know their limits.

The third **A** stands for **Accept** which involves equipping oneself physically and mentally for stress.

People can increase their capacity to tolerate stress **physically** through proper diet, regular exercise and relaxation techniques. Relaxation and exercise provide the double bonus of releasing stored up tension as well.

Mental resistance is bolstered through positive affirmation, taking time for mental health, getting clear about goals, values and priorities.

Social resistance is strengthened by building and maintaining support systems, investing in relationships, clear communication and intimacy.

Spiritual resistance is especially important in times of high stress. Meditation, prayer, worship, faith and commitment strengthen people.

Another way to **Accept** stress is to **change the way you perceive the situation or yourself**. Changing unrealistic expectations and irrational beliefs such as "I should succeed at everything I try" is a good start. Building self-esteem and cultivating a positive attitude help as well.