

Preparing for Stress

My Progress

- What steps have you taken toward your goal(s) this week?
- How were you able to achieve the steps?
- If not, what got in your way? How will you overcome that barrier?

Let's Discuss

- Over the past month, what big stressors have you experienced?
- What have you done in the past to manage big stressors?
- What can you do to prepare for big stressors?
- How have big stressors impacted your problems or symptoms?



Arun's Story

"I had my depression under control, but when my mom got sick, I fell apart. I didn't eat, I couldn't get out of bed, I started drinking more, and I didn't want to talk to anybody. It took months for me to start to feel better and I lost my job in the process. Things got better for me when I learned about how to fit stress reducing practices into my life. I'm better prepared to handle future big stressors."

— Arun, a person in recovery from alcohol use disorder and major depressive disorder.

Good to Know

- **Stress** is a natural part of everyone's life and is sometimes helpful in motivating us to get things done.
- It's when we experience big stressors like moving, getting married, or experiencing the death of a loved one that our **stress can increase to unhelpful levels**.
- **Big stressors or life events can cause high levels of stress** that impact mental ill health and substance use. It can worsen symptoms or lead to relapse.
- Unlike daily hassles, **life events can create stress that lasts weeks or months**, and we often know that they are coming.
- Incorporating **healthy strategies** like exercise, eating healthy foods, and maintaining a meditation practice into our lifestyle **can help us prepare for when we experience high levels of stress due to life events**.



Short Meeting
Guide Video
Tutorial

My Experiences

Once Arun understood more about stressful life events and strategies that help reduce his stress, he felt better prepared to effectively manage future stress. Arun found it helpful to identify a few practical strategies he could incorporate into his daily life. Your turn: On the back, check the boxes next to the life events you have experienced and make a note next to the check about what helped you to feel less stressed when they happened. Then make another check next to the life events you are likely to experience in the future.

Life Event	I Have Experienced This Event	What Helped Me Reduce My Stress	This Event May Happen In The Future
Moving	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Getting Married	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Having a Baby	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Relationship Change (i.e., Divorce, Separation, or Break-up)	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Injury or Illness	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Job Changes	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Major Financial Problem	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Injury or Illness of a Loved One	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Death of a Loved One	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Victim of a Crime	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Getting Arrested	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Losing Housing	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Being Hospitalized or Going to Detox	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No		<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Arun decided that he could prepare for coping with future stress most effectively by fitting his strategies into his daily routine. In particular, he realized that a sitting meditation, having a bedtime routine, and a weekly game of basketball helped him feel less stress overall. He also made a list of people he would call if he needed support. Your turn: Use the space below to identify two daily stress management strategies and two additional coping strategies for dealing with life events.

Daily Life Stress Management Strategies	Additional Coping Strategies
1.	1.
2.	2.

Let's Practice Sitting Meditation

A **sitting meditation** is a mindfulness practice that helps us recognize and manage stress. Practicing regularly, even just once a day, allows us to check in with our thoughts and let them go, giving our minds a break from the stress in our lives. For most people, it takes time to develop a strong meditation practice. It helps to start small. Try meditating for 3 minutes and add on from there.

1. Develop the steps of sitting meditation:

- Sit comfortably with both feet on the floor, allowing your arms to rest at your sides or in your lap. Sit up straight, but not stiffly.
- Your eyes can be closed or open with a soft gaze. Relax the muscles in your face, jaw, and tongue.
- Allow yourself to notice how your body feels in this relaxed posture.
- Now shift your attention to your breath. Notice how your breath feels as it flows through your mouth and nose. Don't change your breathing, simply experience the sensations that it creates in your body.

• You will notice that you are having thoughts. Don't try to stop them, just notice them, and return your attention to your breath.

2. **Watch your worker demonstrate the steps of the skill, then try it out together.**
3. **Discuss with your worker how the practice felt, what you did well, and how you might do it differently in the future.**
4. **Continue to practice and discuss with your worker.**

Next Steps

- What did you find helpful about our meeting today?
- What would you like to do for your next step toward your goal(s)?
- Practice Sitting Meditation to prepare for a life event.
- I'd like to do something else _____.