



How to Recover from Stress

COVID19 has had a negative impact on society and the workplace in many ways. The loss of lives, disruption of the economy, and changes in people's lifestyles has caused enormous stress across America and the world.

Fortunately, there are ways that individuals can recover from the stress of the pandemic.

Research has shown that in the aftermath of any traumatic experience, 75% of people impacted are able to handle ongoing adversities while 25% struggle to cope. The difference between these two groups is the ability to deal with stress in healthy ways. How we handle stress determines how it affects our mind and bodies.

Types of Stress

There are two types of stress: short-term stress and long-term stress. Long-term stress—such as stress caused by a global pandemic—can lead to serious physical and mental health problems, like developing substance abuse disorders, for some individuals.

Scientists found a rise in substance abuse among people in New York City neighborhoods that were affected by 9/11. This research provided insight into the public health effects of widespread traumatic events.

We have learned that some people exposed to stress are more likely to abuse drugs and alcohol or to relapse into addiction. Even if a person knows that drug abuse is harmful, he or she may believe it relieves stress. But the truth is, some drugs affect the brain the same way stress does. Long-term drug and alcohol abuse makes users more sensitive to everyday stress than non-users.

Brain research has found that stress can cause changes in the brain just like those caused by addictive substances. This is why some people who experience stress are more vulnerable to developing substance use disorders.

How to be More Stress-Resistant

Some people are just better at handling stress and recovering from stressful events. What is their secret? People who are better at handling stress don't turn to drugs or alcohol for relief. These people have learned how to stay balanced and handle strong or difficult emotions without the use of mind-altering substances. They are able to maintain a sense of safety and have developed a strong social support system.

Stress-resistant people view difficulty as a challenge, not a paralyzing event. They are committed to their lives, their goals, their relationships, friendships and their religious or spiritual beliefs. This helps them to recover faster from stress.

People who handle stress well are able to bounce back when things don't go as planned. They don't wallow in failures and difficulties; they acknowledge the situation and then move forward.

Here are some concrete ways to become more resistant to, and recover better from stress:

Take care of your body. Stress is as much physical as emotional. This is why good nutrition, getting enough sleep, drinking plenty of water, and regular exercise are so important.

Avoid negative thoughts and actions. Masking the pain of stress with drugs or alcohol only makes things worse. Focus instead on giving your body resources to manage stress, rather than trying to eliminate the feelings of stress altogether.

Help others. Supporting a friend in need, being available when a coworker needs someone to talk to, and providing care for loved ones can empower you to overcome stress.

Make and move toward goals. Develop some realistic goals and do something every day, no matter how small, to move you closer to the things you want to accomplish.

Keep things in perspective. Try to realize when you may be engaged in irrational thinking. Don't assume that everyday difficulties are catastrophes. You might not be able to change a highly stressful event, but you can change how you respond to it.

Get professional help when needed. At times, we all need help from others. If you feel like you are unable to function well on your own, seek help from a licensed mental health professional.

The following information is provided by the Georgia Department of Behavioral Health & Developmental Disabilities.

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DRUG USE AND SUICIDE

The life expectancy of certain groups of Americans has decreased in recent years after decades of progress in better health. Our lifespans are getting shorter!

A big cause of this setback has been the increase in "deaths of despair"—suicides, opioid overdoses, and alcohol-related disease. And all that was before the COVID-19 pandemic, which has resulted in more alcohol consumption and opioid overdoses, as well as more time spent stuck at home where alcohol, prescription, over the counter, and illegal drugs may be kept.

Misuse and abuse of alcohol or other drugs is a well-known risk factor for suicide and studies show that substance use disorder is identified in a large percentage of those who die by suicide.

But why? What is the connection between drug use and suicide?

Consequences

Drug use can lead to many negative consequences including job loss, financial loss, relationship problems, legal problems, loss

of housing, and physical illness. Drug use may also be a response to prior adverse and traumatic life experiences. Either way, drug use is closely mixed up with other risk factors that can lead someone to think about suicide.

Methods

Poisoning, including drug overdoses, is the third most common cause of suicide deaths in the United States, and overdosing on purpose is the most common form of suicide attempt. Opioids, barbiturates, and combinations of certain medications or drugs can lead to dangerous, medically serious outcomes. Having access to these toxic substances can increase your risk.

Inhibitions

It is sometimes hard to know whether a drug overdose was on purpose or by accident. But we know that for people struggling with thoughts of suicide, there is often a mixture. Some part of that person wants to live, and some part of that person wants to die. Drug and alcohol use can lower our inhibitions and survival instincts, and make it easier for someone to make poor, impulsive decisions.

If you or someone you know is struggling with thoughts of suicide or needs help getting into detox, contact the Georgia Crisis and Access Line at 1-800-715-4225 or download the MyGCAL app on your mobile device.

To learn more about suicide prevention, visit the DBHDD website at: <https://dbhdd.georgia.gov/suicide-prevention>.

Or contact the Suicide Prevention Director, Rachael Holloman, at: rachael.holloman@dbhdd.ga.gov.

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:
1-800-273-TALK (8255).