

Coping with Unthinkable Stress

Real-life tips to help you manage the stress you're under.



A global pandemic. An economic downturn. Schools canceled. Shops and restaurants closed. Layoffs, furloughs, and reduced hours.

Any one of these things would be scary. Combined, they lead to unthinkable levels of stress. In this guide, stress management expert Jen Butler shares eight ways you can handle the stress you're under so you can make it through one of the biggest challenges we've ever faced.

It's easy to feel completely overwhelmed right now. That's ok.

Everyone on the planet is going through a whole range of emotions. Some people think this is the worst thing ever. Some people focus on finding the silver lining.

But there's one thing everyone has in common.

"Everyone is still sad. Everyone is concerned. Everyone is still feeling like we're in crazy time," said Jen Butler, the founder and CEO of JB Partners, a SMaRT firm dedicated to building successful teams. SMaRT stands for Stress Management and Resilience Training.

"Just because people are not showing their fears doesn't mean they're not fearful or concerned. There's a grieving process. Grief is about loss. It's about things we were looking forward to, like going on vacation that you had to cancel or your child's graduation from high school. It's about losing your job, or missing friends, or not being able to hug your mom. It's grieving over losing normalcy, over losing routine. And it's important we all recognize that."

4 A's of Stress Management



Sometimes it can be stressful when you feel like the people around you aren't reacting to events the way that you think they should. People have different coping strategies, Jen Butler explains

Adapting

Adapters try to roll with the changes. They acknowledge what's happening around them but change the day-to-day situation to help them overcome the stress they feel.

For example, parents might let their kids eat cereal for dinner or have more screen time than usual. Adapters are usually the first people to take a look at their bills and determine which services they can cancel or cut back.

Dentists who are adapters might start advertising to let people know they are open for emergency dental care or may explore teledentistry and other options that will let them still serve their community.

Avoiding

Just wanting to pretend this isn't happening is actually a common response.

"We all have moments of avoiding," said Jen Butler. "I don't want to think about it. I don't want to talk about it. We binge-watch TV, binge-eat, anything that takes our minds off of the current situation."

Avoiding can be a healthy choice if it's a temporary coping strategy.

"Your spouse may say, 'I realize we need to talk about our finances, but I need a few days to process it before we have that conversation.' They are taking a period of time to process or cool off before they address it."

Altering

Altering is when you completely change your situation. For example, if you got laid off, you may look for a job in another industry.

Or you can alter the way that you think about a situation. People who are good at using altering as a coping mechanism will reframe the situation.

“They may say being laid off is a blessing, because it was a job they hated and this was the impetus they needed to do something they really want to do,” explained Jen Butler.

Accepting

Accepting a situation is stressful does not mean that you’re resigned to it. Resigning is passive; it means you’re giving up. Accepting is an active way to deal with your situation and stress.

For example, if you lost your job, you might focus on setting a budget, updating your resume, and connecting with people on LinkedIn who might be able to give you advice on next steps. You can also apply this coping strategy to your social situation. If you feel lonely and isolated, then try to connect with people through Facetime, Google Hangouts, or other live video streaming services.

4 R’s of Stress Management

When things get stressful, it’s a good time to go back to basics. Our bodies have a natural defense against stress, but we have to take care of ourselves in order to stay healthy. Simple things like setting a regular time for meals, limiting alcohol consumption, and restricting the number of hours you spend watching or reading news are all a good place to start.

Rest

If you’re tossing and turning at night, try doing 10 minutes of stress-release yoga either before you go to bed or when you can’t sleep. There are several free videos on YouTube or available for purchase on streaming services like Amazon.

Reignite

We rarely have time to relax. Give yourself permission to relax, read a book, do a puzzle, pick up a hobby, complete an unfinished project, or just spend more time with your family.

Release

Words have power, and you can release tension with affirmative phrases like, “We will get through this. Just take it one hour at a time.”

Reconnect

Consider this an opportunity to connect with the people who you care about. Reach out to three people every day via calls, texts, social media messaging, or even game apps like Words with Friends. When was the last time you connected with an aunt who lives out of town, a former coworker, or your best friend from high school? This could be a great time to reconnect.



To learn more stress management techniques and to download Jen Butler's free e-book "10 Best Ways to Reduce Stress," visit www.JenButlerPartners.com

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