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### **Creative Ways to Handle Stress**

With the hustle and bustle of the holiday season upon us, many will experience increased feelings of stress. For the aging group, changes in lifestyle and health may increase stress and anxiety, especially during this time of year. Stress looks very different from one individual to another. There are many ways stress and anxiety can be exhibited. Observation and talking with an individual are the best ways to identify possible stress and anxiety. They may not open up about what they're feeling, so it is important to keep an eye out for the subtle signs. Most of the symptoms get dismissed as due to "just getting older." As always, when there is a change in a person's behavioral patterns or physical issues it is best to speak to the person's physician regarding any concerns. Some possible symptoms to look for are as follows:

- Feeling fatigued and not rested
- Insomnia and/or nightmares
- Change in sleep habits / patterns
- Becoming easily irritated or angered
- Loss of appetite or weight loss
- Weight gain
- Frequent headaches, or neck or back aches
- Forgetfulness
- Poor concentration
- Restlessness
- Muscle weakness
- Lack of interest in activities once enjoyed

Recognizing stress and anxiety is the first step in helping to manage and cope with it. If someone is feeling overwhelmed, stressed, and anxious, it may be beneficial to get help from outside sources and offer some forms of relaxation and de-stress activities. With the aging population, it will be very important to help them take care of their mental, emotional, and physical health. Drinking water and eating a well-balanced diet can help. Engaging in gentle, simple exercises, activities that are enjoyable, and social activities can lead to a decrease in stress symptoms. Sleep is also essential for good health and coping with stress.

When helping take care of an aging individual, the caregiver must also remember to take care of themselves. The old saying is true: *one must take care of oneself in order to help take care of someone else*. It is just as important that the caregiver eat a balanced diet, exercise, and get enough rest to function properly. The caregiver must take time each week to do something that is enjoyable to them - something to look forward to, such as a movie or art class. Social support plays a large role in coping. It does not have to be a typical support group: just being with family and friends can give a caregiver strength.

Everyone can benefit from effective de-stress and relaxation activities. These activities should focus on physical, emotional, creative, mental and spiritual needs. It can be as simple as contact with others in a social setting - for example, drinking tea with someone or going with a small

group of friends to a concert. Laughter is another amazing stress reliever. Laughing for one minute is equivalent to 15 minutes of exercise on a bike or 30 minutes of quick walking. Laughter can reduce the stress hormone and boost the immune system. Watching some funny videos on Youtube can be the perfect activity to create laughter.

Remember, the activity possibilities are endless. It is important to find activities that the person enjoys and is capable of doing. It is important to monitor the length of the program and limit over-stimulation. Find activities that encourage feelings of peace, enjoyment, and satisfaction.

Below are just a few possible stress-busting activities:

- Deep Breathing
- Games, including board games and cards
- Jigsaw puzzles
- Maintaining and watching a fish aquarium
- Listening to music
- Aroma therapy - but be care which scent is used. Make sure it is a scent that is soothing to the person.
- Watching a movie
- Pet therapy
- Creating a Laughter Basket. Add funny simple toys, bubbles, play-dough, silly noise-makers
- Adult coloring books, puzzles, or puzzle books
- Reading or listening to stories
- Many websites offer a variety of activities for the aging population that you can explore for ideas

### **References:**

The American Institute of Stress - [Stress.org/seniors](https://www.stress.org/seniors)

Elder One Stop - [elder-one-stop.com](https://www.elder-one-stop.com)

Aging Care - [agingcare.com](https://www.agingcare.com)

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Armistead Senior Care - [armisteadinc.com](http://armisteadinc.com)

## ORGANIZATIONAL HIGHLIGHT

### **The Mental Health and Recovery Services Board of Lucas County**

701 Adams Street, Suite 800

Toledo, Ohio 43604

Phone: 419-213-4600

Fax: 419-244-4707

Board office is open Monday-Friday, 8 am to 5 pm

The Board provides funding for prevention and treatment services in Lucas County. Information about service providers is available at <http://www.lcmhrsb.oh.gov/service-providers/>

#### **Vision**

A compassionate community that embraces recovery and mental wellness.

#### **Mission**

To cultivate a high quality network of resources that inspires personal recovery and promotes mental wellness for Lucas County residents.

#### **Crisis Text Line**

Text **4Hope** to 741 741

#### **Recovery Helpline**

419-255-3125

Call 24/7 to be connected to mental health and addiction treatment:

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