

Department of Defense

Work-Life Programs

Health & Wellness



April: National Stress Awareness Month 2023

Stress is one of the biggest public health challenges that we face as Americans, and we can't be healthy without considering and including mental health. Although it's a common belief that mental health and physical health are separate issues, the reality is that they often cannot be separated; experiencing stress can lead to many kinds of ailments. In fact, mental and physical health are two sides of the same coin. Experiencing distress in one's life can lead to physical health problems like heart disease, insomnia, digestive issues, and immune system challenges, while also being a culprit for serious mental health disorders such as generalized anxiety disorder and major depressive disorder.

National Stress Awareness Month has been observed since April 1992 to raise awareness of the causes and cures for our modern-day stress epidemic. Having a dedicated month for stress awareness allows opportunities for open conversation on the impact of stress in our daily lives. It is also a dedicated time to remove the guilt, shame, and stigma around mental health.

Stress is a reaction to a situation where one feels anxious or threatened. We all experience stress, yet, every person can experience and process stressful situations in very different ways. Common reactions to a stressful event can include:

- **Disbelief, shock, and physical or emotional numbness**
- **Feeling sad, frustrated, or helpless**
- **Difficulty concentrating and making decisions**
- **Headaches, back pains, and stomach problems**
- **Smoking or the use of alcohol or drugs**

How to Observe National Stress Awareness Month

- **Practice meditation.** One of the most effective ways to deal with stress is to learn how to silence the mind. Meditation is one of the most popular methods of achieving this quiet.
- **Incorporate exercise.** Another way to battle the effects of stress is to exercise. Whether you're a jogger, bicyclist, or just like to take walks, be sure to get some fresh air and exercise into your daily routine.
- **Share your story.** If you experience stress or anxiety, April could be a good time to share your story, perhaps via social media. Mental health issues have been considered taboo for far too long, but this is changing, and you can help to change it too.
- **Reach out to your social circle.** You don't have to share your story with the whole world, but it's well advised to engage with people whom you trust. As the old saying goes, "a problem shared is a problem halved."
- **Be kind!** Kindness costs nothing, and can make a huge difference in someone's life!

For More Information visit:

- National Institutes of Health (NIH): [National Stress Awareness Month | Office of Human Resources \(nih.gov\)](#)

For additional information, email the DCPAS Work-Life Branch at:

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