



National Institutes of Health  
*Office of Management*

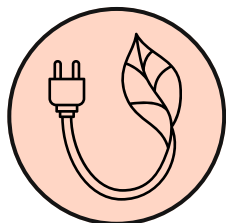
# Stress Kit for Election Season

Tips and resources to cope with  
tension and information overload

Brought to you by the  
NIH Employee Assistance Program

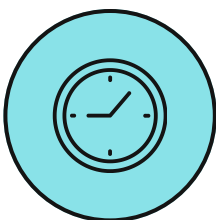


Election season can bring about many emotions, including stress, and everyone responds to heightened levels of emotional distress differently. We encourage you to utilize this guide to assist you to find positive ways to cope, and practice self care.



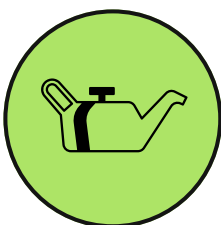
### **Unplug:**

Limit your consumption of social media and the 24-hour non-stop images. It's important to stay informed, but creating boundaries is important.



### **Be Present:**

Use reflection to recognize your inner thoughts and feelings. Be curious and non-judgmental, and give yourself permission to feel the way you do. Although avoiding can be useful, "stuffing" or ignoring strong emotions can have negative impacts.



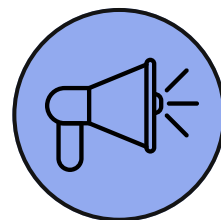
### **Refuel:**

Focus on restoring yourself with rest and healthy food. Drink water and try to limit caffeine. Move a little every day. Take a walk; look at the sky; be in nature. Journal or meditate. Make art or watch funny videos. Read something fun.



### **Connect:**

Engage with supportive friends and allies. Talk about current issues, if needed, but be aware of when you're feeling overwhelmed. Not everyone will share your perspective, so it's okay to limit your topics and avoid heated conflicts. Reach out to supportive services on campus, including EAP.



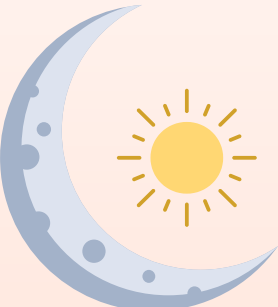
### **Do Something:**

Channel what you're feeling into positive, meaningful activity. Be informed and proactive around issues that matter to you. Find ways to engage in your community through advocacy in ways that fit for you.


# Unplug

## **Stay informed, but know your limits:**

Monitor how you feel after news consumption. Feeling preoccupied or even upset by national events may be a sign to cut back on your news intake and limit social media discussions.



Consider scheduling a short block of time in the morning and one in the evening to catch up on news without checking for every new update during the day.



During “digital breaks,” take time to focus on something enjoyable, such as a hobby, exercising, being in nature or spending time with family and friends.

# Be Present

Consider practicing **self-compassion** as you work through challenging or uncertain times. Try some of [these](#) exercises compiled by Dr. Kristin Neff, a renowned researcher of self-compassion.

Grab your phone and your ear buds and head outside for a guided [mindful walk](#) to de-stress.

Looking for more guided meditation? [This](#) website offers introductory videos to mindfulness and guided meditations.



NIH EAP would like to acknowledge that mindfulness originated in Eastern spiritual traditions, namely Buddhism, and has since been popularized in Western countries in ways inconsistent with its original purpose.

Listen to nature and soothing [Tibetan singing bowls](#).

# Refuel

## Balance



Focusing on your wellbeing is vital! Trying to keep a balance in most areas of your life will help you roll through challenging days more smoothly and keep you on the road to wellness!

## Exercise

NIH offers virtual group fitness classes and [wellness programs](#) for the NIH workforce! View the [online calendar](#) for their current fitness and wellbeing events!



## Eating and Nutrition



For tips, guidelines, and health information, this is a great resource! Visit the NIH [food and nutrition](#) page for more food and nutrition resources, including nutrition basics, meal planning, and pre-recorded webinars.

## Sleep

Is your sleep schedule irregular? Are you sleeping more than you want to be? Are you having [trouble falling asleep](#)? If the answer to any of these questions is “yes,” you may benefit from these [sleep hygiene tips and resources](#)!



# Connect



## Why Connect?

- To decrease loneliness, stress, depression, and anxiety
- To acknowledge collective trauma and experience solidarity
- To experience love and belonging
- To give and receive care and compassion



## Spiritual Connection

Spirituality can be one way to connect with yourself, others, nature, or a higher power(s).

## Five Ways to Build Stronger Connections

courtesy of Robert Reffkin  
COMPASS, Founder & CEO

1. **Write a letter**
2. **Pick up the phone and call**
3. **Ask meaningful questions**
4. **Answer questions with honesty**
5. **Connect via video**

### [Loving-kindness meditation](#)

Find local or online spiritual communities

### [Animal/Nature live cams!](#)

# Do Something

It can be challenging to stay motivated when everything around us seems chaotic and scary. But doing something - some action, no matter how small - can lessen some of the uncertainty.

What you do doesn't need to be political - taking a step to stand up for or stand in for a person or a cause or the environment means *we're not powerless*. Check out the ideas on this page!

Activism, service and generosity are a few ways to promote a sense of empowerment and contribution when we may be feeling helpless. Want to have a voice in local or national politics? Check [this](#) out for ideas!

Simply want to support a cause that you care about? You can volunteer locally or for a chapter or a national organization. [Start here!](#)



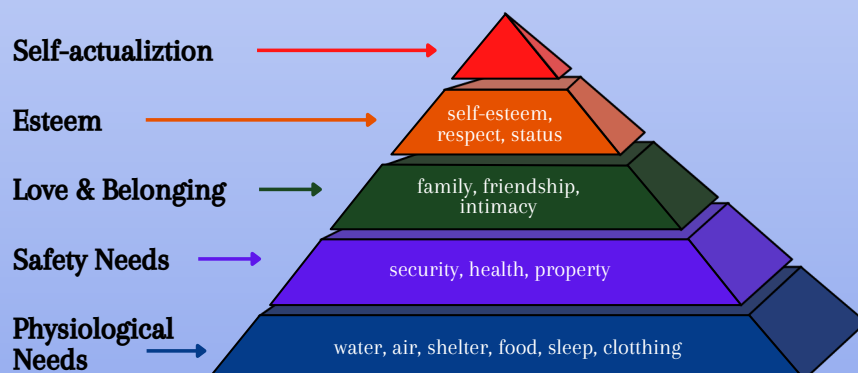
## Connect with your values

Identifying what is important to us can be one way to foster motivation. Try this [online values cards sort](#) (also available in a [printable version](#)) and then consider how you can express your values on a daily basis.

## Learn about [Vision Boards](#)

### Wholeness

Think about what makes you feel whole, grounded, or like you. It can be helpful to consider Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.



# Self-Soothing

Courtesy of [www.blessingmanifesting.com](http://www.blessingmanifesting.com)

Self-soothing is a quick and effective way to reduce the intensity of negative emotions.

## Sight

Low lighting,  
Soothing colors,  
Sleeping masks,  
Coloring books,  
Favorite movies,  
Nature views



## Touch

Soft cuddly things,  
Massage,  
Hot/cold showers,  
Heated/weighted  
blankets



## Smell

Aromatherapy,  
Fresh air,  
Candles/incense,  
Comforting smells,  
Scented lotion



## Taste

Strong flavors,  
Warm drinks,  
Eat slowly,  
Nostalgic flavors,  
Try new foods



## Sound

Calming noise,  
Favorite music,  
Nature sounds,  
Binaural beats,  
Guided meditations





# Additional Resources

## Employee Assistance Program:

**Phone:** (301) 496-3164

**Website:** [www.ors.od.nih.gov/sr/dohs/eap](http://www.ors.od.nih.gov/sr/dohs/eap)

**Location:** NIH main Campus: Bethesda Building 31 Rm. B2B57

**Hours:** Monday - Thursday: 8am - 5pm. Friday 7:30am - 4pm.

**Services:** In-person, virtual, or telephone short term counseling.

- [Wellness@NIH](mailto:Wellness@NIH)
- [Work-Life@NIH](mailto:Work-Life@NIH)
- [Employee Well-Being Listserv](#)
- [Civil](#)
- [Ombudsman](#)
- [Mindful Fed Program](#)
- [National Institute of Mental Health](#)
- [NIH Office of Research Services Resources & Referral Services](#)
- [NIH Wellness Facebook Group](#)

**Need Immediate support?**

**Call or text: 988**

**(24/7, multiple languages)**

Thank you to California State University at Northridge who generously allowed us to edit and share this wonderful resource. This document was adapted from Michigan State University, California State University at Long Beach, Penn State Harrisburg, and University of Washington - Bothell.