

Find Your Purpose

Mental Health & Mindfulness

Pursue Your Passion and Find Your Happiness

Studies agree—when you pursue activities and interests you are passionate about, you feel happier, more confident and more motivated. But how do you know what your purpose is? What does it feel like when you've found it? Complete this month's activity for a few useful questions to consider.

section **01**

Your May Activity: Find Your Purpose

Consider big questions and write down your responses. If you aren't living your purpose today, think about short - and long-term changes that will help you get there.



Defining and Utilizing a "Purpose"

It seems like a fluffy, simple concept, but it can be very hard to define. Your purpose could be anything: work, family, charity, even a hobby. It just matters that it matters. And not just to you. If you know what your passion is, consider ways it can be leveraged to bring joy or assistance to others!



Dangers of Anxiety; Reducing Anxiety

section **02**

A Stress and Anxiety FAQ

How Stress and Anxiety Differ?

While the symptoms can be similar and often intertwined, stress and anxiety are two distinct things. As obvious as it sounds, stress arises from existing stressors—any circumstance or situation that makes you feel angry, frustrated or nervous.

Anxiety is a feeling of apprehension or doom that does not have an immediately recognizable cause. It is often felt alongside stress, but also appears without a discernable reason, or lingers after the actual reason for stress has gone. Common signs and symptoms of anxiety include nervousness, a sense of panic or doom, increased heart and breathing rates, trouble concentrating and sleeping, gastrointestinal problems, and weakness or fatigue.

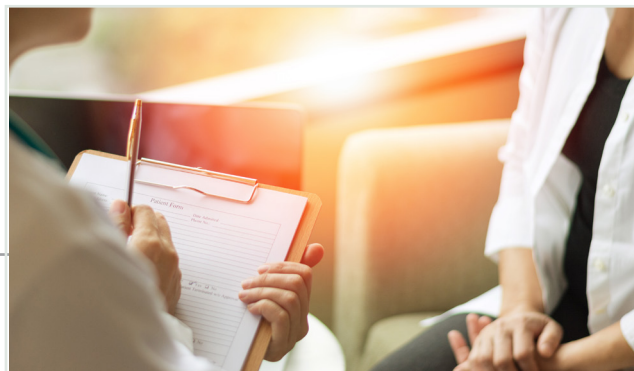
Why Do We Feel Stress and Anxiety?

It's not just your body being obnoxious and it's not all in your head. The physical component of stress is a chemical reaction in your body that is designed to help you survive. When you feel threatened, certain hormones are released into your body. These hormones speed up your heart rate and breathing, sharpen your senses, increase your blood pressure—basically, they trigger the famous “fight or flight” response.

Unfortunately, physical reactions designed to help us survive as cave dwellers aren't always useful in the present day. Even positive change, such as a promotion or a newborn baby, can cause stress that impedes your ability to handle a situation, instead of assisting it.

How Can I Reduce My Stress and Anxiety?

Keep reading for a number of everyday tips you can practice to reduce the effects of stress in your life. But if you are concerned that your stress is bubbling over into anxiety, seek advice from a professional! Unchecked anxiety can lead to any number of anxiety disorders, such as agoraphobia — extreme, life-altering fear of and avoidance of situations that might cause panic—or social anxiety disorder, in which self-consciousness and fear of embarrassment causes a person to avoid social situations. Even more frightening, attempts to cope with undiagnosed anxiety disorders can lead to depression, substance abuse, social isolation and other difficulties.



Simple Solace from Stress

Stress creeps up on all of us, whether we know it or not. Sometimes we recognize the hard times while they're happening; other times we don't realize things are getting out of control until we feel overwhelmed.

Fortunately, people aren't locked into a certain level of stress management at birth—managing, reducing and productively addressing stress are skills that can be learned. Keep these principles in mind and try to practice them every day, even when you feel in control.

Stress Management Tips

- 1. Talk to people you trust.** Sharing concerns with someone else helps you feel better, even if the problem can't be solved immediately.
- 2. Be physically active throughout the day.** What that means could be different for everyone, but a consistently active lifestyle reduces mental tension and your risk of depression.
- 3. Plan and organize.** A little preparation goes a long way. Create to-do lists, plan out your time and prepare in advance to make your day go a little bit smoother.
- 4. Sleep—and give up other bad habits.** It really is incredible how much poor habits impact a person's stress level.
- 5. Let yourself laugh. Even when you're by yourself.** You don't win any awards for not laughing, so you might as well have a little fun.
- 6. Donate time to others.** Helping others is a great way to help yourself. Selfless acts improve a person's immediate outlook and, with regular practice, sense of self-worth.
- 7. Keep perspective.** In the long-term, it really doesn't matter if you mow the lawn today. When you feel the tension rising, ask yourself what tasks need to be taken care of and what tasks can wait.
- 8. Find time for yourself.** It could be as simple as 5-15 minutes each day. Find a pocket of time where you can be alone, then use that time for quiet reflection, or to practice deep breathing techniques and empty your mind.

May Recipe

Spinach, Chicken and Wild Rice Soup

Use leftover chicken or pull apart a roasted chicken for this warm, soothing bowl of soup.

INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups water
- 14 oz. can of reduced-sodium chicken broth
- 10 3/4 oz. can of reduced-fat and reduced-sodium condensed cream of chicken soup
- 2/3 cup wild rice, rinsed and drained
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme, crushed
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 3 cups cooked chicken
- 2 cups fresh spinach, shredded

INSTRUCTIONS

1. In a 3-1/2 to 4-quart slow cooker, combine the water, chicken broth, cream of chicken soup, uncooked wild rice, thyme and pepper.
2. Cover and cook on low-heat setting for 7 to 8 hours or high-heat setting for 3-1/2 to 4 hours.
3. To serve, stir in chicken and spinach.

Total Time (Cook and Prep): 260 minutes
Servings: 6



NUTRITION INFO:

216 calories
4 g fat
64 mg cholesterol
397 mg sodium
19 g carbohydrates
2 g fiber
26 g protein

