

3 Ways to Maintain Self Care

A Guide for UCM Students

We all have stress — at work, at home, and at school. Sometimes we can feel especially stressed because of a bad interaction with someone, too much work, or everyday hassles like getting stuck in traffic.

Negative stress can keep you from feeling and performing your best — mentally, physically and emotionally. But no one's life is completely stress-free. It's important to know how to manage the stress in your life. Try these three simple techniques for dealing with it.

1. POSITIVE SELF-TALK

Let's be honest, we all talk to ourselves! Sometimes we talk out loud but usually we do it in our heads. Self-talk can be positive or negative. Negative self-talk increases stress. Positive self-talk can help you calm down and control stress. With practice, you can learn to shift negative thoughts to positive ones.

- I can't do this. --> I'll do the best I can. I've got this.
- Everything is going wrong. --> I can handle this if I take it one step at a time.
- I hate it when this happens. --> I know how to deal with this; I've done it before.
- I feel helpless and alone. --> I can reach out and get help if I need it.
- I can't believe I screwed up. --> I'm human, and we all make mistakes. I can fix it.
- I'll never get better. --> I don't understand this yet.

To really make it work, practice positive self-talk every day, whenever you notice negative thoughts.

3. DO A STRESS-BUSTING ACTIVITY

Doing things you enjoy is a natural way to relieve stress and find your happy place. Even when you're down, you may find pleasure in simple things like going for a walk, catching up with a friend, or reading a good book.

When stress makes you feel bad, do something that makes you feel good, even if only for 10 or 15 minutes.

- Make art -- draw, color, paint, or play a musical instrument.
- Work on a scrapbook or photo album to focus on good memories.
- Read a book, short story or magazine.
- Meet a friend for coffee or a meal.
- Play a favorite sport like golf, tennis, or basketball.
- Do a hobby like sewing, knitting, or making jewelry.
- Play with your kids or pets – outdoors if possible.
- Listen to music or watch an inspiring performance.
- Take a walk in nature.
- Take a relaxing bath and feel the stress wash away.
- Work in the garden or do a home improvement project.
- Go for a run or bike ride to clear your head.

The key is to find your groove and make it a practice. You'll be amazed at how quickly you may start to feel better once you disrupt the cycle of stress.

2. TRY AN EMERGENCY STRESS-STOPPER

Emergency stress stoppers are actions to help you defuse stress in the moment. You may need different stress stoppers for different situations, and sometimes it helps to combine them.

Here are some ideas:

- Count to 10 before you speak or react.
- Take a few slow, deep breaths until you feel your body unclench a bit.
- Go for a walk, even if it's just to the restroom and back; it can help break the tension and give you a chance to think things through.
- Try a quick [meditation](#) or prayer to get some perspective.
- If it's not urgent, sleep on it and respond tomorrow. This works especially well for stressful emails and social media trolls.
- Walk away from the situation for a while, and handle it later once things have calmed down.
- Break down big problems into smaller parts. Take one step at a time, instead of trying to tackle everything at once.
- Turn on some chill music or an inspirational podcast to help you deal with road rage.
- Take a break to pet the dog, hug a loved one or do something to help someone else.
- Work out or do something active. [Exercise is a great antidote for stress.](#)

Support is a phone call or click away

You are a valued member of the UCM community, and your health and well-being are important to us.

We're here to assist you if you need help.

- **Counseling Center:**
660-543-4060, ucmo.edu/cc
- **Public Safety:** 660-543-4123
- **University Health Center:**
660-543-4770, ucmo.edu/uhc