



Managing Political Stress

Jill Adaman, Ph.D.

Many of us are experiencing stress related to the current political environment. The uncertainty of these turbulent times makes it hard to maintain a sense of safety and stability. In addition, whatever your political views, there are sure to be others who see things differently and don't hesitate to let you know. Here are some ways to take care of yourself in these stressful times.

Stay healthy

- A healthy mind requires a healthy body, so keeping yourself in good physical shape is key to managing stress of any kind.
- Try to prioritize eating a healthy diet, getting some exercise, and setting aside enough hours for sleep.
- To help your mind and body reset during the day, take brief 1-minute breaks to close your eyes and just breathe.
- Save the last hour before bedtime for relaxing activities only.

Limit your intake of news and social media

- Seek out calm, objective reporting and avoid news sources that make you feel overly angry or worried. Unfortunately, fear and anger tend to increase viewership, so there's a lot of this on the air, in print, and on social media. Sites such as [Allsides](#) can help you get your news from sources that focus on the facts instead.
- Turn off phone notifications related to news or social media. Check the news once or twice a day, at a time that works for you.
- Don't automatically buy into the outrage of politicians or political commentators. Pause and think carefully about who stands to benefit from making you scared or angry, and keep in mind that those people may be playing on your emotions to try to bypass your reasoning skills.

Support causes and candidates you believe in

Taking some kind of action goes a long way toward minimizing the helplessness you may be feeling. You can call your congressperson, make a financial contribution, or work with a group aligned with your interests and values. Find a way to contribute that fits your resources and your personality.

Be choosy about discussing politics with others

While it can be helpful to talk with others who share your views, it's also possible for you to "catch" their anxiety about current events. For other reasons, it can also be stressful to talk with people who have views different from yours. Remember that you always have a choice about whether to engage in a political conversation with someone. If you're not feeling up to it for whatever reason, try one of these:

- "You know, I've found that talking about politics stresses me out lately, so I'm taking a break for now."
- "You've made some interesting points. Let me think about them for a while, and we can pick this up another time."
- "It looks like we see things very differently, so let's just agree to disagree on this for now."

Stay in the moment

When we're feeling stressed and don't know how events will turn out, our minds fill in the blanks with lots of scary thoughts. We imagine every possible worst-case scenario, maximizing the dangers and minimizing our resources and coping abilities. Instead, remind yourself that you are OK right at this moment. Appreciate the things in your life that are going well right now. Reassure yourself with the knowledge that whatever changes may come, you can handle them and support will be available if you want it.

Stay connected

- In times of stress, it's especially important to stay connected with family and friends who make you feel loved and valued. This can help build your resilience and remind you that there are good things in your life even during this stressful time.
- It's also helpful to stay connected with activities that bring you a sense of peace, creative expression, and/or a break from thinking about your current stresses. These might include spending time in nature, doing art activities, writing, playing music, or watching a favorite movie or TV show.

Talk to someone who can help! If you'd like a referral to a licensed psychologist in your area, contact the Pennsylvania Psychological Association at www.papsy.org.