

## **Managing Election Stress**

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Election season is stressful in so many ways. This year's presidential election may feel especially intense for Pennsylvanians, since we are considered a swing state and candidates from both parties are campaigning hard for our attention and our votes. Here are some ways to take care of yourself through the election and beyond.

### **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 and in print. Sites such as [Allsides](http://Allsides.com) 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 political ads – think carefully about who stands to benefit from making you scared or angry, and remember that the ad 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 election stress. You can write postcards, knock on doors, call your congressperson, work on a phone bank, stuff envelopes, or make a financial contribution. 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. These connections can remind you that there are good things in your life even now in this stressful time, and can help build your resilience. Similarly, make time for activities that bring you peace and a sense of connectedness with the world. These might include spending time in nature, doing creative projects, or watching a favorite movie or TV show.

**If you need additional support, reach out to a qualified mental health professional. PPA’s [Psychologist Locator](#) can help you find a licensed psychologist near you.**