

Sandoval County Senior Program Administration

CENTER LOCATION

APRIL 2025

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Hours of Operation:
Monday—Friday 8-5pm

Sponsorship

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Non Metro New Mexico
Economic Development District
Area Agency on Aging

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All Sites individualize their newsletters to their local area information, activities calendars and games.

Health & Wellness

Stress and How to Reduce It: A Guide for Older Adults

Recently, 66-year-old Cliff moved to a new community and was having trouble finding affordable senior housing. His temporary solution—an extended-stay hotel—cost more than his \$736 monthly Social Security check could cover. Most days, that meant he didn't eat.

Linda, 62, faced a different set of challenges. Right before COVID-19 hit, she lost both her job and her marriage. Newly unemployed and living alone, she wasn't sure how to navigate these uncharted waters by herself.

And Charlsie, 83, struggles to understand technology. Already “somewhat of a worrier,” her mistrust of any call on her flip phone has unwittingly isolated her from relatives and friends whose help with paperwork and other tasks could be a great relief.

None of these older adults knows each other, but they each share something in common: Stress.

What is stress?

According to the World Health Organization, stress is a mental reaction to challenging circumstances. Cliff's financial instability. Linda's layoff and divorce. Charlsie's technophobia and social isolation.

From an evolutionary standpoint, stress exists to help humans survive; it's the basis of what scientists commonly call the “fight-or-flight” response. We experience it both emotionally and physically; yet the signs of stress can sometimes be easy to miss. Why? Because the condition is so prevalent in everyday American life. As Cliff explained, “I didn't even realize how much the stress of not having enough money to pay for housing was affecting me.”

That's precisely why it's so important to look for red flags. While some stress actually can be helpful, chronic stress can lead to negative health outcomes that worsen with age.

“Stress is a fact of life that most of us experience at one time or another,” said Jennifer Tripken, associate director of NCOA's Center for Healthy Aging. “But the unique relationship between stress and aging means that older adults and their families, friends, and caregivers should pay particular attention to what causes it, how to recognize it, and what to do about it.”

Let's take a closer look.

Health & Wellness continued

Does stress affect older adults more?

In a word, yes.

According to the American Institute of Stress, stress and inflammation are closely linked. Further, stress negatively impacts the body's ability to effectively respond to certain kinds of inflammation that lead to age-related conditions.

In other words, more stress equals more inflammation, and more inflammation when we're stressed equals more (or worse) health problems. These include atherosclerosis (hardening of the arteries), Type 2 diabetes, arthritis, dementia, and cancer, to name a few. The same report notes that chronic stress also can reduce the effectiveness of certain vaccines in older adults, including for the flu and pneumonia. And stress actually accelerates the aging process itself.

You can see that stress and age don't play well together," Tripken said. "Learning how to manage it is so important to maintaining long-term health and well-being."

What causes stress?

Just as the effects of stress can vary in different age groups, so can the reasons we experience it. A younger person might feel stressed out due to launching a new career, starting a family, or paying off student loan debt, for instance. An older adult likely has a different set of worries.

Some common causes of stress in older adults include:

- Chronic illness
- Caregiving responsibilities
- Loss and grief
- Loneliness or boredom
- Financial worries
- Major life changes, such as retirement

What are the symptoms of stress?

Because of its relationship to inflammation and disease, learning to recognize the emotional and physical signs of stress can be an important first step toward taking care of your health. In an older person, these can include:

- Headaches
- Digestive issues
- Irritability
- Heart palpitations
- Sleep disturbances
- Poor concentration
- Crying
- Social withdrawal

Health & Wellness continued

This list isn't exhaustive, Tripken explained, and individual people may exhibit many of these signs or just one. Plus, it's easy to make excuses for stress, or—like Cliff—fail even to recognize it. But if something feels off, it probably is. If your moods or daily habits have changed, this can be a clue that you're experiencing stress.

Top 6 ways to deal with stress

The good news is, there are some really good stress management strategies anyone can use. Even better, you don't have to try them all, or all of them at once. Choose one or two approaches that interest you and are realistic.

1. Remove the source

This isn't always possible, but if you can, try to identify what's causing your stress and do something to change that. Cliff, for example, got help paying for housing. Linda asked about applying for SNAP benefits. And Charlsie took steps to overcome her technophobia by seeking assistance at her local senior center.

2. Eat well

Following a healthy, balanced diet can boost the immune system, help combat the effects of inflammation, and fuel positive physical energy. And, filling up on bulky, good-for-you fruits and vegetables can prevent “stress-eating” a bag of potato chips or pint of ice cream.

3. Stay hydrated

Drinking enough water yields many health benefits, including improved brain performance. Adding a glass or two a day can help keep you mentally sharp and stabilize your emotions. Plus, keeping yourself hydrated leads to better digestion, eases headaches, and boosts your energy, too.

4. Exercise

Regular physical activity helps reduce blood pressure, ease arthritis pain, combat chronic illness, and lift your mood. And you don't have to lace up a pair of running shoes and start training for a marathon to reap these benefits, either. Even gentle movement like tai chi can make a world of difference.

5. Get enough sleep

Sleep is essential to good physical and mental health. It's the time when the body repairs itself and the mind takes a break. In particular, REM (deep) sleep helps regulate mood and memory. Establishing “sleep-friendly” routines can help both to reduce stress-related insomnia and other negative effects.

6. Meditate

Engaging in deep breathing, positive visualization, and other mindfulness practices can help calm racing thoughts, slow a rapid heart rate, relax tensed-up muscles, and create a sense of well-being. There are many different ways to meditate, so take time to explore some approaches and find one that works for you.

Health & Wellness continued

Remember: everyone experiences stress from time to time. Being proactive about managing yours can maintain your physical and mental health and well-being so you can age well.

Sources

1. The American Institute of Stress. Seniors and Stress. Found on the internet at <https://www.stress.org/seniors-and-stress>
2. Harvard Health Letter. Stress relief tips for older adults. Found on the internet at <https://www.health.harvard.edu/stress/stress-relief-tips-for-older-adults>

Nutrition

Eating, Diet, & Nutrition for Irritable Bowel Syndrome

How can my diet help treat the symptoms of IBS?

Your doctor may recommend changes in your diet to help treat symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Your doctor may suggest that you

- eat more fiber
- avoid gluten
- follow a special diet called the low FODMAP diet

Different changes may help different people with IBS. You may need to change what you eat for several weeks to see if your symptoms improve. Your doctor may also recommend talking with a dietitian.

Eat more fiber

Fiber may improve constipation in IBS because it makes stool soft and easier to pass. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020–2025 recommends that adults should get 22 to 34 grams of fiber a day.

Two types of fiber are

- soluble fiber, which is found in beans, fruit, and oat products
- insoluble fiber, which is found in whole-grain products and vegetables

Research suggests that soluble fiber is more helpful in relieving IBS symptoms.

To help your body get used to more fiber, add foods with fiber to your diet a little at a time. Too much fiber at once can cause gas, which can trigger IBS symptoms. Adding fiber to your diet slowly, by 2 to 3 grams a day, may help prevent gas and bloating.

Nutrition continued

Avoid gluten

Your doctor may recommend avoiding foods that contain gluten—a protein found in wheat, barley, and rye—to see if your IBS symptoms improve. Foods that contain gluten include most cereal, grains, and pasta, and many processed foods. Some people with IBS have more symptoms after eating gluten, even though they do not have celiac disease.

Low FODMAP diet

Your doctor may recommend that you try a special diet—called the low FODMAP diet—to reduce or avoid certain foods that contain carbohydrates that are hard to digest. These carbohydrates are called FODMAPs.

Examples of foods that contain FODMAPs include

- fruits such as apples, apricots, blackberries, cherries, mango, nectarines, pears, plums, and watermelon, or juice containing any of these fruits
- canned fruit in natural fruit juice, or large amounts of fruit juice or dried fruit
- vegetables such as artichokes, asparagus, beans, cabbage, cauliflower, garlic and garlic salts, lentils, mushrooms, onions, and sugar snap or snow peas
- dairy products such as milk, milk products, soft cheeses, yogurt, custard, and ice cream
- wheat and rye products
- honey and foods with high-fructose corn syrup
- products, including candy and gum, with sweeteners ending in “-ol,” such as sorbitol, mannitol, xylitol, and maltitol

Your doctor may suggest that you try the low FODMAP diet for a few weeks to see if it helps with your symptoms. If your symptoms improve, your doctor may recommend slowly adding foods that contain FODMAPs back into your diet. You may be able to eat some foods with FODMAPs without having IBS symptoms.

Reference

[3] U.S. Department of Agriculture and U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2015–2020. 9th Ed. Published December



Staying Active

Occupational Therapy for Older Adults

Occupational therapy is a type of rehabilitation therapy that helps older adults do daily tasks and other activities safely and more easily. This can include things such as eating, bathing, and making meals. These and other tasks can become harder or painful for an older adult to do on their own due to an injury or health condition, disability, or in some cases because of normal aging. Occupational therapy can help you learn to do these activities in a way that's easier for you, to help you regain and maintain some independence.

Occupational therapy is done by specially trained professionals called occupational therapists (OTs). They have an advanced degree and are licensed to practice. OTs sometimes work with occupational therapy assistants and aides (OTAs), who can also help with your treatment.

What kinds of activities do OTs help with?

OTs can help older adults with many types of tasks. These include daily self-care tasks (activities of daily living) such as:

- Eating
- Bathing and getting dressed
- Using a toilet
- Moving from one place to another, such as from a bed or chair to a toilet, tub, or shower (called transferring)

An OT can also help with more complex daily activities (instrumental activities of daily living). These tasks require more thinking (cognitive) or social skills, and include:

- Food shopping and making meals
- Using a phone or computer
- Cleaning and doing laundry
- Managing daily medicines
- Managing finances
- Driving

What conditions can be helped by occupational therapy?

Many conditions can affect a person's ability to do the things they enjoy doing or need to do. Occupational therapy can help people with conditions such as:

- Stroke
- Dementia
- Brain injury
- Alzheimer disease

Staying Active continued

- Arthritis
- Multiple sclerosis
- Diabetes
- Chronic pain
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Vision problems

What happens during an occupational therapy session?

An OT will first do an assessment to find your current level of function. As part of this, the OT will review your health history. They will watch you do certain tasks to see how well you are functioning. They will also talk with you about the tasks that are hard for you to do. They may also talk with other people involved in your care, such as a family member, caregiver, or other healthcare providers.

The OT will then work with you to create a treatment plan with short-term and long-term goals. They can show you helpful exercises, assess your home environment for safety, and teach you new ways of doing things. They can also help you to get certain tools or products (called assistive devices) as needed, that can help you to do things more easily. And they can show you how to use these devices safely and correctly.

For instance, based on your needs, an OT may do things such as:

- Show you an easier way to do tasks such as getting dressed
- Show you how to safely get in and out of the shower
- Teach you exercises to help improve your strength, flexibility, or hand-eye coordination
- Do an assessment to make sure your home is safe and well-lit
- Help to prevent falls by securing or removing throw rugs and getting rid of clutter
- Help you to get certain devices and teach you how to use them, such as a raised toilet seat, bath chair, cane, reacher, or pill organizer

How do you find an OT?

Your healthcare provider will write a referral for occupational therapy services. Ask your provider to recommend an OT in your area.

Where are occupational therapy sessions held?

OTs and OTAs work with people in many different settings, such as assisted living centers, nursing homes, hospitals, outpatient clinics, rehab centers, or in a person's home.

How is occupational therapy paid for?

Occupational therapy sessions may be paid in part by Medicare if you are older than 65, or by Medicaid or private health insurance. However, Medicaid coverage varies by state. Check with your state Medicaid agency for more information. And always check with your insurance company to see what your specific plan covers.

Volunteer

AmeriCorps Works for America

AmeriCorps, the federal agency for national service and volunteerism, released the 2025 National Service Reports. The reports provide a comprehensive view of the financial investments made by AmeriCorps across all 50 states, Washington, DC, and U.S. territories. These state reports demonstrate the scope of AmeriCorps' presence throughout the nation with programs in nearly 35,000 locations spanning urban, rural, and tribal communities. AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers serve at nonprofit, faith-based, municipal and community-based organizations to address the nation's most pressing issues in six core focus areas: education, economic opportunity, disaster services, environmental stewardship, healthy futures and veterans and military families. These latest National Service Reports prove it, showing strong returns on investment. Through evidence-based projects meeting urgent local needs, we engaged 200,000 Americans in sustained service last year, who then inspired 1.9 million more volunteers to join in.



AmeriCorps.gov/NewMexico



Volunteer Continued

Meeting Needs in New Mexico

Last year more than **4,500** Americans of all ages and backgrounds united to meet local needs through national service in New Mexico. AmeriCorps invested more than **\$12.2 million** in federal funding to support cost-effective community solutions, working hand in hand with local partners to empower individuals to help communities tackle their toughest challenges.

AmeriCorps members and AmeriCorps Seniors volunteers served at more than **300** locations across New Mexico. **Thank you for volunteering and making a difference in our community!** If you'd like to find out how you can participate, call the volunteer program office at 505-404-5818



Benny D. Bernal
Mary Gallegos
Laurie Golden
O'Rourke
Barbara C. Herkenhoff
Lillie B. Herrera
Juanita Hinsley
Jane Petre
Cynthia (Jeanine)
Savell
Kathryn F. Warren



Happy Birthday

KEEP **BERNALILLO BEAUTIFUL** EVENTS 2025

EVERYONE WORKING TOGETHER AND PARTICIPATING, WE CAN KEEP BERNALILLO BEAUTIFUL!



E-CYCLE EVENT

TOWN HALL
829 CAMINO DEL PUEBLO
BERNALILLO, NM 87004

SATURDAY, APRIL 5, 2025
11 AM TO 3 PM

KEEP BERNALILLO BEAUTIFUL

E-CYCLING EVENT

This FREE event will provide residents with the opportunity to safely recycle old electronics.

Drive-thru event and staff will be available to unload your vehicle.

**SATURDAY
APRIL 5, 2025
11 AM TO 2 PM
AT TOWN HALL**

You can enter to win \$100.00 RANDO GIFT CARD.

Electronics accepted for recycling include: Computers/Laptops/Servers/Cell Phones/Tablets/ Printers/Scanners/Smart TVs/ Monitors/ Tablets/ Satellites/ Equipment/ Rechargeable Batteries/ MP3 Players/Powerful Cell Phones/Car & Boat/Computer peripherals and Toner/ Cartridges/ Batteries/Caravans/Computer game assemblies/CD and DVD players/TVs/Monitors/Phones and smart TVs/Blu-ray/DVD/Video projection TVs and Flat-screen TVs.

tobnm.gov or 505-771-7133

ROOTED IN BERNALILLO

Celebrate Arbor Day

SALE NEW LOCATION

BERNALILLO COMMUNITY GARDEN
118 CALLE MALINCHE
BERNALILLO, NM 87004

**SATURDAY, APRIL 26
10 AM TO 3 PM**

TREE, SHRUB & FLOWERS, SALE! ALL ONLY AVAILABLE WHILE SUPPLIES LAST!

SALE

SANDOVAL COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS WILL BE ANSWERING ANY QUESTIONS, ALONG WITH ALBUQUERQUE BACKYARD REFUGE.

MORE INFORMATION
CONTACT 505-771-7133
OR
TOBNM.GOV

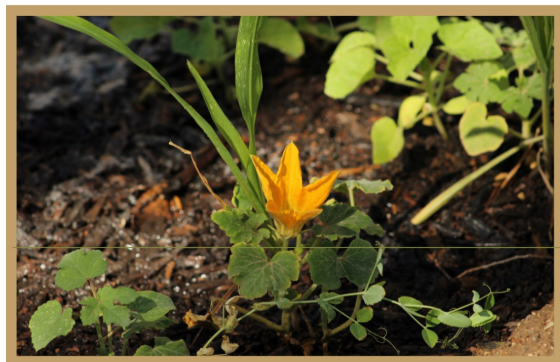
ARBOR DAY SALE
NEW LOCATION
BERNALILLO COMMUNITY GARDEN
BEHIND TOWN HALL
118 CALLE MALINCHE
BERNALILLO, NM 87004

SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2025
10 AM TO 3 PM OR
UNTIL SUPPLIES LAST

BERNALILLO COMMUNITY MUSEUM PRESENTS:

PLANTS OF THE BOSQUE

THE AGRICULTURAL AND MEDICINAL TRADITIONS OF THE MIDDLE RIO GRANDE VALLEY



Opens: **APRIL / 26 / 2025**

Location:
**118 CALLE MALINCHE
BERNALILLO, NM 87004**

More information:
BERNALILLOMUSEUM.ORG

