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## What is Stress First Aid?

Everyone experiences stress. Stress First Aid can teach you to manage that stress and become resilient. The goal of Stress First Aid is to understand stress on a continuum, ranging from healthy and tolerable to ill and impairing, and help move people from unhealthy reactions to healthier ones. This model includes peer support and has seven core actions that are focused on identifying and addressing problems associated with various levels of stress you or others may be experiencing.

Monitoring your level of stress and getting help if you need it is important for maintaining positive mental health. Stress First Aid also provides tips to assist a friend or a loved one who may be experiencing a stressful situation or event.

## Healthy Ways to Manage Stress Using the Seven C's\* Model:

**Check:** Observe and listen, especially in times of stress. Has a friend or loved one seemed not quite themselves lately? Check in to see how you can help and offer support.

**Coordinate:** Is something causing you or a friend a lot of stress? It's ok to ask for help or assist in arranging resources or help for someone else.

**Cover:** During stressful situations, make sure you're safe and make others feel safe. Increasing someone's sense of safety can help them better deal with a stressful situation.

**Calm:** When stress happens, find ways to soothe yourself and others. Stress can cause sleep issues and keep you from relaxing. Try to calm your stress reactions by refocusing your attention. Try to slow your heart rate and give your mind a much-needed time out.

**Connect:** It helps to reach out to others during stressful times. Talking to or spending times with others can reduce feelings of isolation during times of stress.

**Competence:** Learn skills to deal with stress reactions. Self-care is an important part of maintaining good mental health. Doing an activity you enjoy can help your ability to manage stress reactions.

**Confidence:** Work on rebuilding trust and hope when stress occurs. Sometimes a person dealing with a stressful situation can feel hopeless and struggle with feelings of poor self-worth. Simply being there for someone and showing empathy can help them to overcome feelings of self-doubt and improve self-esteem during times of stress.

Sometimes, you or someone you know needs a bit more help, which is good to recognize. Anyone can reach out to the Ohio CareLine or the Crisis Text Line, 24 hours a day, for free, confidential emotional support from a trained counselor. Call 1-800-720-9616 or text 4 hope to 741 741 to get connected. Learn more healthy ways to help manage stress at [mha.ohio.gov/StressFirstAid](https://mha.ohio.gov/StressFirstAid).

\*Source U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/type/stress\\_first\\_aid.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/type/stress_first_aid.asp).



## Check Your Level of Stress to See How You Can Help Move Yourself or Others Back Towards the “Green” Ready State

# What’s Your Stress Level?

Stress can happen to anyone. People’s response to stress lies along a continuum, from ready to ill. Knowing where you or someone you care about is along this spectrum can help you move yourself or them from ill or injured to a healthier, ready state. Visit [mha.ohio.gov/stressfirstaid](http://mha.ohio.gov/stressfirstaid) to learn more.

READY (Green)	REACTING (Yellow)	INJURED (Orange)	ILL (Red)
<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Optimal functioning</li> <li>Adaptive growth</li> <li>Wellness</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At one’s best</li> <li>Well-trained and prepared</li> <li>In control</li> <li>Physically, mentally and spiritually fit</li> <li>Mission-focused</li> <li>Motivated</li> <li>Calm and steady</li> <li>Having fun</li> <li>Behaving ethically</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mild and transient distress or impairment</li> <li>Always goes away</li> <li>Low risk</li> </ul> <p><b>CAUSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any stressor</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feeling irritable, anxious or down</li> <li>Loss of motivation</li> <li>Loss of focus</li> <li>Difficulty sleeping</li> <li>Muscle tension or other physical changes</li> <li>Not having fun</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More severe and persistent distress or impairment</li> <li>Leaves a scar</li> <li>Higher risk</li> </ul> <p><b>CAUSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Life threat</li> <li>Loss</li> <li>Moral injury</li> <li>Wear and tear</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Loss of control</li> <li>Panic, rage or depression</li> <li>No longer feeling like normal self</li> <li>Excessive guilt, shame or blame</li> <li>Misconduct</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEFINITION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clinical mental disorder</li> <li>Unhealed stress injury causing life impairment</li> </ul> <p><b>TYPES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PTSD</li> <li>Depression</li> <li>Anxiety</li> <li>Substance abuse</li> </ul> <p><b>FEATURES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Symptoms persist and worsen over time</li> <li>Severe distress or social or occupational impairment</li> </ul>



Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, [https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/type/stress\\_first\\_aid.asp](https://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/treat/type/stress_first_aid.asp)

## Seven C’s Model:

# 7 Cs of Stress First Aid



- 1. CHECK**  
Assess: observe & listen
- 2. COORDINATE**  
Get help and refer as needed
- 3. COVER**  
Get to safety immediately
- 4. CALM**  
Relax, slow down, refocus
- 5. CONNECT**  
Get support from others
- 6. COMPETENCE**  
Restore effectiveness
- 7. CONFIDENCE**  
Restore self-esteem and hope



Adapted from Westphal, Richard. (2018). Combat and Operational Stress First Aid: Responder Training Manual 2011.