

**Stress  
Issue 36**  
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## Why is stress concerning for the Intellectual / Developmental Disability (IDD) population?

When stressed, we are less likely to handle difficult situations well. Think about the last time you had a bad day at work. Were you pleasant when you got home? It is no different for someone with IDD. However, people with IDD often have a much harder time with managing stress. There are a few reasons for this:

- People with IDD often have traumatic histories.
- People with IDD often don't have as many good things going on in their lives that would help them take their minds off of stressful things.
- People with IDD often haven't learned (or had the opportunity to learn) how to manage stress.

**We often try to insulate or protect people with IDD from stress, but we shouldn't shrink the world when the long-term goal is to help people do well in the most typical environments-- even stressful ones.**



## What should we do to help?

Instead of trying to remove stress, we can help teach stress management instead. One of the keys is to teach people how to recognize when they are feeling stressed, and coping skills to help increase acceptance and relaxation during those times.

**Tips specific to Stress Management:** When teaching or practicing Stress Management, always teach and practice during times that are calm. Don't turn stress management into something that a person only does when they are angry. It is often best to model it yourself as you teach. This isn't just because it is an effective teaching strategy, but also because it makes Stress Management into something that we all have to do.

**Some relaxation strategies to practice include:** deep breathing, visual meditation, walking, aquatics, listening to music, adopting a relaxed posture, progressive muscle relaxation, playing a game-- really, anything the person finds relaxing is what should be included in Stress Management lessons.

**Stress management should include more than just relaxation tips, be sure to practice how to sit with stressful moments and accept them.**

For more information about Stress Management go here:  
<https://www.stress.org/management-tips>

<https://www.apa.org/topics/stress/index>



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