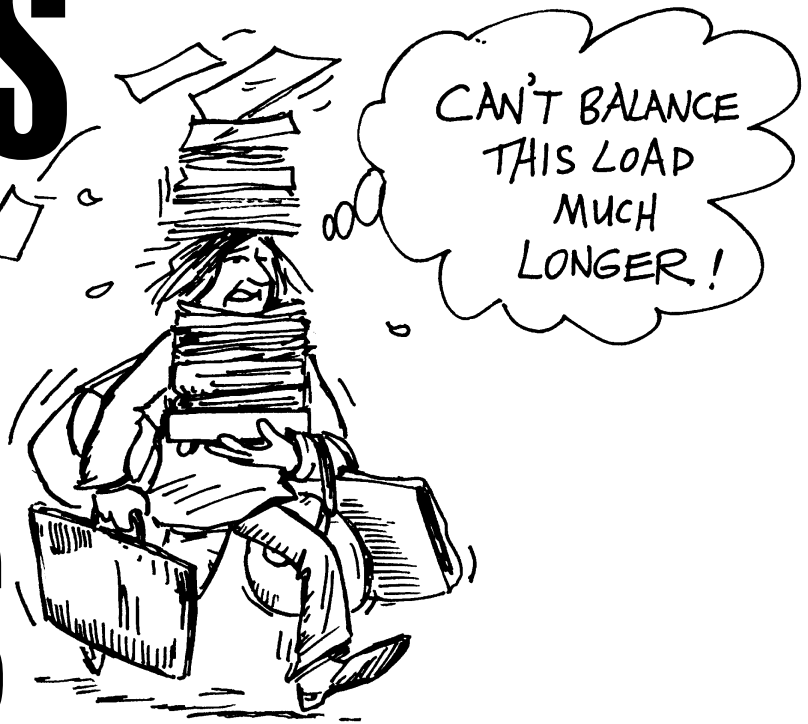


Assess Your Stress



Not all stress is bad. Stress is your body's response to any change in its inner or outer environment. We expect things such as getting fired from a job or a death in the family to produce stress. But even good things, such as a promotion or a new baby, can create stress.

Stress is as much a part of life as eating and breathing. The key to living well with life's stressors is making sure there are enough periods of relaxation to balance out the periods of stress. When we're faced with one stress period after another, with no time to relax in between, it can affect our physical and mental well-being.

Here are some common symptoms of too much stress and not enough relaxation. Put a check by any that have troubled you in the past month:

- fatigue
- sleeplessness
- irritability, anxiety or depression
- a change in appetite
- headache, backache or chest pain
- a noticeably negative attitude
- numbness
- feeling overwhelmed or out of control
- poor concentration
- little things bothering you
- frequent crying
- muscle spasms
- constipation or diarrhea
- shortness of breath
- difficulty controlling your temper

If you're experiencing any of these symptoms, try some simple stress reduction techniques, such as meditation, deep breathing, relaxation or exercise.

If you checked many boxes, you may require more than simple relaxation techniques. Consider asking a professional counselor to help you identify and deal with the stress in your life.