

**The Overcoming MS program emphasises the critical role of stress management in managing multiple sclerosis (MS). Stress can exacerbate MS symptoms and negatively impact overall health, making effective stress management a crucial component of the Overcoming MS approach.**



# Core principles



## 1. Stress and MS connection

Stress is known to trigger and worsen MS symptoms. Effective stress management can help reduce the frequency and severity of relapses and improve quality of life for individuals with MS.



## 2. Holistic approach

The Overcoming MS Program integrates stress management with other lifestyle changes, including diet, exercise, and medication, to provide a comprehensive approach to MS management.



## 3. Regular practice

Incorporating stress management techniques into daily routines is essential. Consistency is key to experiencing long-term benefits.

# Stress management techniques

## 1. Meditation

Meditation is a cornerstone of the Overcoming MS stress management strategy. Regular meditation helps calm the mind, reduce anxiety, and promote a sense of well-being. Types of meditation include mindfulness meditation, guided meditation, and breath-focused meditation.

## 2. Mindfulness

Mindfulness involves staying present in the moment and fully engaging with current activities. It helps reduce stress by preventing the mind from dwelling on past worries or future anxieties.

## 3. Breathing exercises

Simple breathing exercises can help lower stress levels. Techniques such as deep breathing and diaphragmatic breathing are effective in calming the nervous system.

## 4. Physical activity

Regular physical activity is a natural stress reliever. Activities like walking, yoga, and swimming can help reduce stress and improve overall physical and mental health.

## 5. Journaling

Writing about thoughts and feelings can help manage stress. Journaling provides a safe outlet for expressing emotions and processing stressful experiences.

## 6. Progressive muscle relaxation

This technique involves tensing and then slowly relaxing each muscle group in the body. It helps release physical tension and promotes relaxation.

## 7. Social support

Engaging with a supportive community can significantly reduce stress. Sharing experiences with others who understand the challenges of MS can be very comforting.

## Benefits

### Reduced anxiety and depression

Effective stress management techniques can lower the risk of anxiety and depression, which are common among individuals with MS.

### Improved sleep

Reducing stress levels can lead to better sleep quality, helping individuals feel more rested and energised.

### Enhanced cognitive function

Stress management can improve concentration, memory, and overall cognitive function, which are often affected by MS.

### Better physical health

Lower stress levels contribute to better physical health by reducing the risk of chronic conditions like hypertension and heart disease.

### Increased resilience

Regular practice of stress management techniques can increase resilience, making it easier to cope with the challenges of living with MS.

## Practical tips

### Start small

Begin with short sessions of meditation or mindfulness and gradually increase the duration as you become more comfortable.

### Create a routine

Establish a daily routine that includes time for stress management practices. Consistency is key to seeing benefits.

### Find what works for you

Experiment with different stress management techniques to find what works best for you. Everyone is different, and what works for one person may not work for another.

### Use resources

Utilise resources provided by the Overcoming MS Program, such as guided meditations and webinars, to support your stress management practice.

### Stay connected

Engage with the Overcoming MS community for support and motivation. Sharing your journey with others can provide encouragement and new insights.



### Learn more

By integrating these principles, the Overcoming MS Program empowers individuals with MS to take control of their health and live fuller, healthier lives.

For more detailed information and resources, visit our website on [www.overcomingms.org](http://www.overcomingms.org)

