

Screening, Assessment, and Support Services (SASS) for Children and Adolescents

What is SASS?

Screening, Assessment and Support Services (SASS), is a crisis mental health service program for children and adolescents, who are experiencing a psychiatric emergency. SASS agencies provide intensive mental health services for eligible children and youth who may need hospitalization, or community based mental health care. SASS services are available by calling the CARES line.

What Is CARES and When Should CARES Be Called?

CARES stands for Crisis and Referral Entry Services. CARES is a telephone response service that handles mental health crisis calls for children and youth in Illinois. A parent/guardian may check to see if their child can receive SASS services, by calling the CARES

Crisis Line:

1-800-345-9049 (Voice),

1-773-523-4504 (TTY).

You should call CARES when a child is at risk to himself or others and any time you or others think a child is having a mental health crisis. If a child has mental health problems, but is **NOT** a risk to self or others and is not experiencing a crisis, contact your local community mental health services provider on the IDHS website at:

<http://www.dhs.state.il.us/page.aspx?module=12&officetype=> or call our Child and Adolescent Client Assistance Line at:

312-793-1361, Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (excluding Holidays).

What Is the Purpose of CARES?

The purpose of CARES is to ask questions of the child's parents, caregivers, or other callers about the child's behavior. CARES will then either send the local area SASS agency to see the child and guardian, or refer the child and guardian to community mental health or other services.

Who Can Receive SASS Services?

Any child or youth in a mental health crisis who may need public funding through the Illinois All Kids Program or Medicaid may receive SASS services.

If the child is eligible for SASS services:

- SASS will work with the guardian and child for at least 90 days.
- If the child is hospitalized, SASS will join the hospital team to care for the child.
- SASS will help the hospital team plan for the child's return home and will provide services when the child is home.
- If the child is not hospitalized, SASS will provide mental health services and supports to help the child stay at home.

How Will Families Be Involved in Their Child's Care?

To assure that services in the State of Illinois are both family-driven and youth-guided, families are the primary decision makers for their child's treatment. SASS will work closely with families

to learn about the child's problems and strengths and may also request that families/parents/guardians participate in the child's treatment, along with the child. SASS will provide and/or link the child and family to services, resources and supports to address the immediate crisis and begin to assist with building resilience. Parents will be offered the services of a Family Resource Developer (FRD). A FRD is a parent/caregiver who has previously navigated the mental health system successfully for a child who has been diagnosed with a Serious Emotional Disturbance (SED). Building on their life experiences, they receive additional training to help consumer families engage and navigate through multiple service systems on the child's behalf.

Other Links

<https://www.illinois.gov/hfs/MedicalProviders/behavioral/sass/Pages/sasshome.aspx>

Free Health Clinics search: <https://www.freeclinics.com/>

Some of many free clinics:

***Bridgeport Free Clinic**

3001 s. Lowe Ave.

Chicago, IL 60616

773-833-3368

***Melrose Park Immediate Care**

106 N 19th Ave.

Melrose Park, IL 60160

708-615-0738

***Women's Care Center**

136 N LaGrange Rd.

LaGrange, IL 60525

708-352-5000

***Access Melrose Park Family Health Center**

8321 N. North Ave.

Melrose Park, IL 60160

708-681-2298

***The Children's Clinic**

320 Lake St.

Oak Park, IL 60302

708-848-0528

***Cicero Health Center Cook County**

5912 w. Cermak Rd.

Cicero, IL 60804

708-783-9800

I. WHAT IS SELF-CARE & WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

Self-care refers to the activities and routines practiced to benefit one's psychological, physical, and spiritual well-being. Self-care activities should be practiced on a regular basis to promote mental well-being. Learning something new, focusing on breathing, physical exercise and expressing creativity are all examples of self-care activities. Self-care can be as simple as waking up 10 minutes earlier than you normally would so that you have time to enjoy your morning coffee in peace. Self-care can also be as luxurious as treating yourself to a professional massage.

It is important to recognize the difference between self-care and self-indulgence. According to an article written by licensed psychologist, Christine Meinecke (2010), "Self-indulgence is characterized by avoidance of the effortful and substitution of quick and easy antidotes." In other words, self-indulgence typically involves using the term "self-care" as a way to justify behaviors that only temporarily relieve stress, such as alcohol consumption, turning to food for comfort, and binge-watching television. These behaviors may relieve stress quickly and temporarily but could have detrimental long term effects on one's health. Self-care is focused on managing and preventing stress and exhaustion in ways that are beneficial to our overall well-being.

Research has shown that there are many benefits of a comprehensive self-care plan. Self-care activities have been proven to:

- **Reduce stress**
- **Increase productivity**
- **Improve health**
- **Help one achieve work-life balance**
- **Prevent burnout and compassion fatigue**

THE BIG LIST OF SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES

Check the ones you are willing to do, and then add any activities that you can think of:

- Talk to a friend on the telephone
- Go out and visit a friend
- Invite a friend to come to your home
- Text message your friends
- Organize a party
- Exercise
- Lift weights
- Do yoga, tai chi, or Pilates, or take classes to learn
- Stretch your muscles
- Eat your favorite ice cream
- Go for a walk in a park or someplace else that's peaceful
- Go get a haircut
- Sleep or take a nap
- Go outside and watch the clouds
- Go jog
- Ride your bike
- Go for a swim
- Go hiking
- Do something exciting like surfing, rock climbing, skiing, skydiving, motorcycle riding, or kayaking, or go learn how to do one of these things
- Go to your local playground and join a game being played or watch a game
- Buy something on the internet
- Go play something you can do by yourself if no one else is around, like basketball, bowling, handball, miniature golf, billiards, or hitting a tennis ball against the wall
- Get out of your house, even if you just sit outside
- Plan a trip to somewhere you've never been before
- Go to a spa
- Go to a library
- Go to a bookstore and read
- Go to your favorite café for coffee or tea
- Visit a museum or local art gallery
- Go to the mall or the park and watch other people; try to imagine what they're thinking
- Pray or meditate
- Go to your church, synagogue, temple, or other place of worship
- Join a group
- Write a letter to your higher power
- Cook your favorite dish or meal
- Cook a recipe that you've never tried before
- Take a cooking class
- Go out for something to eat
- Go outside and play with your pet
- Go borrow a friend's dog and take it to the park
- Give your pet a bath
- Go outside and watch the birds and other animals
- Find something funny to do, like reading the Sunday comics
- Visit fun Web sites and keep a list of them
- Watch a funny movie (start collecting funny movies to watch when you're feeling overwhelmed)
- Go to the movies
- Watch television
- Listen to the radio
- Go to a sporting event, like a baseball game
- Play a game with a friend
- Play solitaire
- Play video games
- Go online to chat
- Visit your favorite Web sites
- Go shopping
- Do a puzzle with a lot of pieces
- Sell something you don't want on the internet
- Create your own Web site
- Join an internet dating site
- Buy something on the internet
- Get a massage
- Go for a drive in your car or go for a ride on public transportation
- Eat chocolate (it's good for you!) or eat something else you really like
- Sign up for a class that excites you at a local college, adult school or online
- Read your favorite book, magazine or newspaper
- Read a trashy celebrity magazine
- Write a letter to a friend or family member
- Write things you like about yourself on paper
- Write a poem, story, movie or play
- Write in your journal
- Write a loving letter to yourself when you're feeling good and keep it with you to read when you're feeling upset

- ___ Call a family member you haven't spoken to in a long time
- ___ Learn a new language
- ___ Sing or learn how to sing
- ___ Play a musical instrument or learn how to play one
- ___ Write a song
- ___ Listen to some upbeat, happy music (start making a collection to play when you're feeling upset)
- ___ Turn on some loud music and dance
- ___ Memorize lines from your favorite movie, play or song
- ___ Make a movie or video
- ___ Take photographs
- ___ Join a public-speaking group and write a speech
- ___ Participate in a local theatre group
- ___ Sing in a local choir
- ___ Plant a garden
- ___ Work outside
- ___ Knit, crochet, or sew—learn how to
- ___ Make a scrapbook with pictures
- ___ Paint your nails
- ___ Trim your nails
- ___ Change your hair color
- ___ Take a bubble bath or shower
- ___ Work on your car, truck, motorcycle or bicycle
- ___ Make a list of ten things you're good at or like about yourself and keep it with you to read when you're feeling upset
- ___ Draw a picture
- ___ Paint a picture with a brush or your fingers
- ___ Make a list of the people you admire and describe what it is you like about them
- ___ Write a story about the craziest or funniest thing that has ever happened to you
- ___ Make a list of ten things you would like to do before you die
- ___ Write a letter to someone who has made your life better and tell them why (you don't have to send the letter if you don't want to)
- ___ Create your own list of self-care activities
- ___ Other ideas: _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

APPS:

- **Calm:** This is an application for a mobile device that helps the user mindful meditation and also provides an option for "sleep stories" to user fall asleep.
- **Sleep Cycle:** This is an application which serves as an alarm clock that users sleep cycles and wakes the user up during light sleep. Waking light sleep is the natural waking point, allowing the user to feel more than waking up by an alarm during deep or REM sleep.
- **Relax Melodies:** This is an application for a mobile device that helps asleep. The user can combine melodies to listen to. The application integrating mindfulness into the user's sleep routine.
- **YogaGlo:** This is an application for a mobile device which has yoga and classes at all levels for \$18/month.
- **Provider Resilience:** This is an application for a mobile device for caregivers prone to burnout, compassion fatigue and secondary stress. The app provides tools to help the provider remain healthy and productive via self-assessment and overall resilience Available for android and iOS devices.



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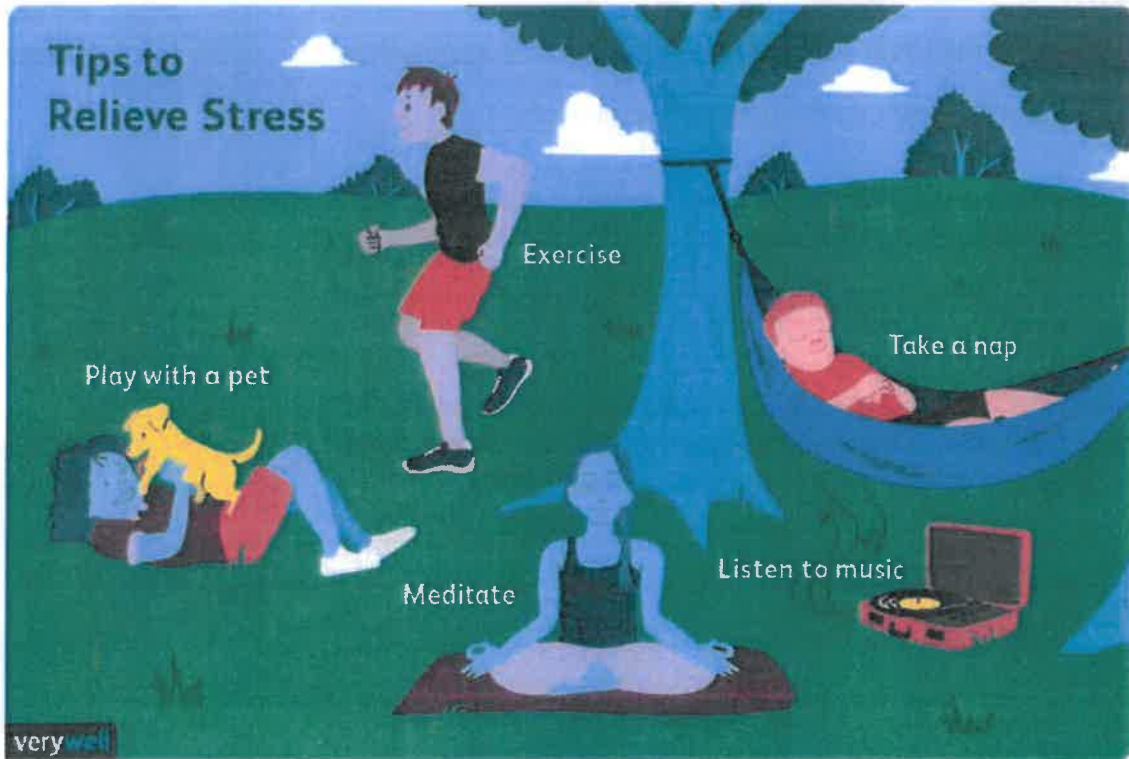
traumatic emotionally ratings.

VIDEOS:

- **"Just Breathe" YouTube:** This YouTube video is 2 minutes of simple, mindful breathing (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eqyj6Rp2Q1w>)
- **Gaia:** With Gaia, you can stream yoga videos online to practice yoga anywhere! https://www.gaia.com/yoga/practices?utm_source=google+paid&utm_term=+yoga%20+on%20+tv&utm_campaign=1-usa-yoga-general-broad&utm_content=yoga-tv-channel-broad&utm_medium=cpc&ch=my
- **"Beyond the Cliff" Ted Talk by Laura van Dernoot Lipsky** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uOzDGrcvmus>

Effective Stress Relievers for Your Life

By [Elizabeth Scott, MS](#)  Medically reviewed by [Steven Gans, MD](#) Updated on January 08, 2020



Verywell / Joshua Seong

From minor challenges to major crises, stress is part of life. And while you can't always control your circumstances, you can control how you respond to them.

When stress becomes overwhelming, or it's chronic, it can take a toll on your well-being. That's why it's important to have effective stress relievers that can calm your mind and your body.

Highly Effective Tips for Relieving Stress

There isn't a one-size-fits-all option when it comes to stress relief, however. What works for one person might not work for another.

And what works for you at home might not be an option when you're at work or in the community (dancing around your living room might be helpful but dancing in the grocery store might not be).

So it's important to have a variety of stress relief tools at your disposal. Then, you'll be able to pick a strategy that works best for your current circumstances.

Short-Term Stress-Relief Strategies You Can Do Anywhere

Whether you're about to be interviewed for a job or you're feeling overwhelmed by your child's behavior at the playground, it's important to have some stress reduction tools that can lower your stress right now.

The best short-term strategies:

- Can be performed anywhere

- Take very little practice to master
- Are free
- Provide immediate relief

Try Guided Imagery

Guided imagery is like taking a short vacation in your mind. It can involve imaging yourself being in your "happy place"—maybe picturing yourself sitting on a beach, listening to the waves, smelling the ocean, and feeling the warm sand underneath you.

Guided imagery can be done with a recording where you listen to someone walk you through a peaceful scene. Or, once you know how to do it yourself, you can practice guided imagery on your own.

Simply close your eyes for a minute and walk yourself through a peaceful scene. Think about all the sensory experiences you'd engage in and allow yourself to feel as though you're really there. After a few minutes, open your eyes and return to the present moment.

Meditate

Meditation brings short-term stress relief as well as lasting stress management benefits. There are many different forms of meditation to try—each one is unique and brings its own appeal.

You might develop a mantra that you repeat in your mind as you take slow deep breaths. Or, you might take a few minutes to practice mindfulness, which involves being in the moment. Simply pay attention to what you see, hear, taste, touch, and smell.

When you're focused on the here-and-now, you won't be able to ruminate about something that already happened and you can't worry about something in the future. Meditation and mindfulness take practice, but it can make a big difference in your overall stress level.

Practice Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation involves relaxing all the muscles in your body, group by group. To practice, you can start with a few deep breaths.

Then, practice tightening and relaxing each muscle group, starting with your forehead and moving down to your toes.

With practice, you'll learn to recognize tension and tightness in your muscles and you'll be able to relax more easily. Each time you practice, however, you should experience a feeling of relaxation sweeping through your body.

Focus on Breathing

Just focusing on your breath or changing the way you breathe can make a big difference to your overall stress level. Breathing techniques can calm your body and your brain in just a few minutes.

The best news is, no one around you will even know you're doing them. So whether you're in a stressful meeting or you're sitting in a crowded theater, breathing exercises could be key to reducing your stress.

While there are many different breathing exercises, like karate breathing, a few simple ones include:

1. Breathe in through your nose and watch your belly fill with air. Count slowly to three as you inhale. Hold for one second and then slowly breathe out through your nose as you count to three again.
2. Breathe in through your nose and imagine that you're inhaling peaceful, calm air. Imagine that air spreading throughout your body. As you exhale, imagine that you're breathing out stress and tension.

Take a Walk

Exercise is a fantastic stress reliever that can work in minutes. Taking a walk allows you to enjoy a change of scenery, which can get you into a different frame of mind, and brings the benefits of exercise as well.

So whether you just need to take a stroll around the office to get a break from a frustrating task or you decide to go for a long walk in the park after work, walking is a simple but effective way to rejuvenate your mind and body.

Fast-Acting Stress-Relief Strategies That Work Well at Home

In the privacy of your own home, there are many stress relief strategies that can help you relax fast. So whether you've had a tough day at work or you're stressed about how much you have to do, these strategies can give you some immediate relief from your stress.

Get a Hug From a Loved One

Physical touch can do a lot to relieve your stress. Hugging a loved one can be especially beneficial.

When you hug someone, oxytocin (also known as the "cuddle hormone") is released. Oxytocin is associated with higher levels of happiness and lower levels of stress.

Oxytocin also causes a reduction in blood pressure. It reduces the stress hormone norepinephrine and can produce a sense of relaxation.

So don't be afraid to ask a loved one for a hug if you need it. It's good for both of you and it can be one of the simplest forms of stress relief available.

Enjoy Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy has real benefits for stress relief—it can help you to feel energized, more relaxed, or more present in the moment.

Emerging research suggests certain scents can alter brain wave activity and decrease stress hormones in the body.

So whether you enjoy candles, diffusers, or body products, consider incorporating some aromatherapy into your day.

Create Artwork

Getting in touch with your creative side may have been easy for you during childhood, but if you've lost touch with your penchant for artwork, it's not too late to pick it up again.

If you aren't into drawing or painting, consider coloring in a coloring book. Adult coloring books have risen in popularity and for good reason—coloring can be a great stress reliever.

Research consistently shows that coloring can have a meditative effect. One study found that anxiety levels decline in people who were coloring complex geometric patterns, making it a perfect outlet for stress reduction.

Long-Term Stress-Relief Strategies for Lasting Health

Certain habits can promote resilience to stress, as well as increase overall wellness. For example, those who exercise or meditate regularly tend to become less stressed in the face of a difficult challenge.

So it's important to create a lifestyle that will help you ward off stress and deal with challenges in a healthy way.

Eat a Balanced Diet

A poor diet can bring greater reactivity toward stress. Emotional eating and reaching for high-fat, high-sugar foods can provide a temporary sense of relief that adds to your long-term stress.

Refined carbs, like cookies and potato chips, can cause a spike in blood sugar. When your blood sugar crashes, you might experience more stress and anxiety.

Consuming a healthy diet can help you combat stress over the long haul. Foods like eggs, avocado, and walnuts support mood regulation and energy balance.

Make Time for Leisure Activities

Leisure activities can be a wonderful way to relieve stress. Yet, many people feel as though their lives are too busy for hobbies, games, or extra fun.

But building time for leisure into your schedule could be key to helping you feel your best. And when you feel better, you'll perform better, which means leisure time may make your work time more efficient.

Whether you find joy in caring for a garden or you like making quilts, hobbies and leisure are key to living your best life.

Develop a Positive Self-Talk Habit

The way you talk to yourself matters. Harsh self-criticism, self-doubt, and catastrophic predictions aren't helpful. If you're constantly thinking things like, "I don't have time for this," and "I can't stand this," you'll stress yourself out.

It's important to learn to talk to yourself in a more realistic, compassionate manner. When you call yourself names or doubt your ability to succeed, reply with a kinder inner dialogue.

Positive self-talk can help you develop a healthier outlook. And an optimistic and compassionate conversation can help you manage your emotions and take positive action.

Practice Yoga

Yoga combines physical movement, meditation, light exercise, and controlled breathing—all of which provide excellent stress relief.

And while you're likely to reap immediate benefits from a single yoga session, you're likely to receive long-term benefits if you incorporate it into your life in a consistent way.

Yoga offers a variety of physical, psychological, and spiritual benefits. To get started, you might take a class, enroll in an online program, or use an app to help you begin practicing.

Express Gratitude

Gratitude helps you recognize all the things you have to be thankful for. Whether you're grateful for a sunny day or thankful you arrived at work safely, think about all the good things you have in life.

Gratitude also reminds you of all of the resources you have to cope with stress, which can be quite empowering.

Studies also show grateful people enjoy better mental health, lower stress, and a better quality of life.

So whether you decide to make it a habit to identify what you're grateful for as you sit around the dinner table or you decide to write down three things you're grateful for in a gratitude journal every day, make gratitude a regular habit.

Prioritize Exercise

Physical activity is key to managing stress and improving mental health. And the best news is, there are many different kinds of activities that can reduce your stress.

Join a gym, take a class, or exercise outside. Keep in mind that there are many different ways to get more physical activity in your day too.

Walking, strength training, kayaking, hiking, and spin class are just a few different examples of ways you can get stress relief.

Strategies That Engage in Problem-Focused Coping

Most stress relievers focus on changing your emotions. But sometimes, you won't necessarily get relief until you change the environment.

This is referred to as problem-focused coping (as opposed to emotion-focused coping). Problem-focused coping involves taking steps to remove the stressor from your life (as opposed to changing how you feel about the stressor).

Reassess Your To-Do Lists

If you're trying to squeeze 20 hours worth of work into 16 hours, you're going to feel stressed. Reducing your workload could be key to helping you get through the day feeling better.

Whether that means stepping away from a committee you joined or it involves hiring someone to complete some of your household chores for you,

Honing your time management skills can allow you to minimize the stressors that you experience, and better manage the ones you can't avoid.

When you are able to complete everything on your "to do" list without the stress of rushing or forgetting, your whole life feels easier.

Obtain Social Support

Having supportive people in your life is the key to stress management. If you lack emotional support and friendship, it's important to get it.

That may mean reaching out to your existing network. Perhaps confiding in a family member or distant friend can help you become closer and it may give you the social support you need.

You may also need to expand your network. Join an organization, attend a support group, or get professional help if you lack supportive people in your life.

Cut out Things That Add to Your Stress

Sometimes, the best way to reduce your stress is to cut something out of your life. Get rid of the things that are adding to your stress so you can experience more peace.

Watching the news, being constantly connected to your digital devices, drinking alcohol, and consuming too much caffeine are just a few of the things that may add more stress to your life. Making some changes to your daily habits could be instrumental in helping you feel better.

A Word From Verywell

Finding the best stress relief strategies may take some experimenting. Some strategies may take practice too.

But it's important to keep looking for the tools that will help you manage life's inevitable ups and downs in a healthy way. Keeping stress at a manageable level is important for your overall well-being.

Read Next: [5 Self-Care Practices for Every Area of Your Life](#)

Article Sources

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