

Approach or Avoid

How Do You Cope With Stress?

When there's a crisis at work or at home, how do you respond? Do you worry and fret and try to get the situation resolved as soon as possible or do you just want to get away from it all?

"Avoiders" and "Approachers"

Your answer can tell you which coping style you adopt when there's stress in your life. Researchers have found that people fall into two basic categories of reaction to stress. "Approachers" want to know everything they can about the situation, questioning and worrying. They can't rest until the problem is dealt with. "Avoiders" tend to push things away. They deal with problems by withdrawing from them.

Neither of these responses is right or wrong. Avoiders seem to cope best with short-term crisis situations, while approachers handle stress over the long haul, but both are using effective coping methods. Knowing which type you are can help you choose stress reduction techniques that fit your style.

Avoiders Are Good Meditators

For instance, if you're an avoider, you tend to block out stress by blocking out the external world. Meditation, reading, doing crossword puzzles or taking a long run or a hot bath are effective stress reducers for you.

You may need special help—such as biofeedback—in recognizing your body's reaction to stress, since you tend not to be aware of it on your own. You may also need the help of a therapist or support group if a crisis comes along that you can't ignore—such as the death of a spouse or loss of a job.

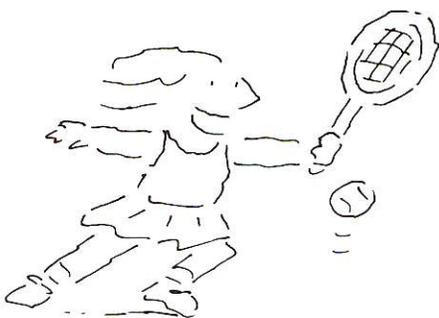


Meditation is an effective stress reducer for "avoiders."

Approachers Are "Problem-Focused"

If you're an approacher, you tend to be a worrier and somewhat high-strung. You may get upset in situations you can't control. Try taking an active approach to stress: Write down your worries as they arise, then set them aside. At an appropriate time, allow yourself a half hour to go over them and find solutions.

You tend to be very aware of your symptoms of stress—jitters, butterflies in the stomach or tense muscles. Exercise can help you relieve this physical tension. Focus on exercise that requires concentration, such as tennis or volleyball, rather than running or swimming, which, like meditation, give you too much time to replay your worries.



"Approachers" can find more effective stress release in activities which require concentration, such as tennis.

If It Feels Good, Use It

A lucky few have a mixed style: They don't sweat the small stuff, but can face big problems actively when necessary. Regardless of your style, you'll

know you're coping with stress effectively if you look forward to your relaxation activities, enjoy them while you're doing them and feel better afterward.

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