

# stress report

THE YOUNG WOMEN'S  
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We surveyed 175 young women of all races and between the ages of 11 to 19 about the impact of stress in their lives.

They told us that SCHOOL, FAMILY, and FRIENDS were the top three things that cause them the most amount of stress.

## Good news about stress:

77.7% of young women are either *doing well or at least average at getting enough sleep at night*.

Sleep helps your body recover from one day and gear up for the next. Most young women need at least 8 to 9 hours of sleep each night.

70.9% of young women *do well at avoiding alcohol and drugs*.

When you are feeling stressed out, it can be tempting to turn to alcohol and/or drugs as a way to feel calmer and better. While some forms of drugs and alcohol can in fact help you feel more relaxed, the problem that you are stressing out about will not go away. You may find yourself turning more often to mind-altering substances to avoid dealing with the sources of your stress. This is not a good idea! Deal with your problems rather than trying to escape them through mind altering substances.

78.3% of young women surveyed said that *they are doing well or at least average at allowing themselves to cry*.

It's absolutely O.K. to cry since that's your body's way of releasing stress and tension. If you need a shoulder to cry on, ask for one.

82.4% of young women *do well or at least average at scheduling time for fun and enjoyable activities*.

It's important to do things that bring you joy and happiness. Make time to enjoy yourself whether that means painting your toe nails, talking to friends, going to the movies, or reading a book.

**STRESS:  
how to deal  
with it**

# STRESS: how to deal with it

**Almost a third or 1 out of three (29.7%) of young women surveyed said that they need to improve at eating nutritious foods and avoiding junk food.**

Here are some tips for keeping your food habits healthy:

1. Eat breakfast. Refuel when you wake up. Eating breakfast will keep you alert throughout the morning.
2. Eat well-balanced meals that include fruits, veggies, whole grains, legumes (beans) and proteins, and low-fat dairy products. To be healthy, you need all of these.
3. Drink up! Your body needs plenty of water each day. Carry a bottle with you and fill it up throughout the day.
4. Try not to overdo sugar. The effects of sweet treats on your body are similar to the effects of stress. A “sugar high” is hard on your body and will leave you feeling tired.
5. Grab healthy snacks. Fill a bowl with fruit and cut-up veggies. Then, when you get the munchies, a healthy choice will be right at your fingertips.

Slow down! Don't shovel your food; savor it. Pay attention to the taste and texture of each bite. Try not to do other things while you eat – like watching TV or using the computer. Instead, focus on enjoying your meal.

**29.9% of young women said that they need to improve at talking out problems with friends and family.**

A heart to heart talk with somebody you trust can help pinpoint what's bothering you. So open up to your loved ones and share what's on your mind!

**37.3% of young women need to improve at expressing their anger constructively (without using any forms of violence).**

Everyone experiences anger as a reaction to frustration or difficulty. The key, however, is to learn to control and express your anger in nonviolent ways. When you are feeling angry, take a deep breath and count to ten in your head. Remember you will be better understood if you express yourself clearly and without using violence.

**32.2% of young women said that they need to improve at exercising.**

Exercise can release built-up stress in your body. When you're under stress, your body releases hormones that help get you ready to deal with a crisis. If the stress doesn't stop, these hormones continue to circulate in your body making you tired and lowering your defenses against illness. Exercise helps your body remove these extra hormones.

**32.8% of young women said that they need to improve at not taking on more than they can handle (learning to say NO). In other words, they need to do better at saying NO!**

Does this sound like you? It's important to set limits and boundaries in your life. Do not take on too many activities and commitments. NO is not a bad word!

**40.9% of young women responded that they need to improve at taking action to improve their community (through social action, volunteering, donations).**

CONTACT the YWAT –

[www.youngwomensactionteam.org](http://www.youngwomensactionteam.org)

# 7 easy steps to becoming an activist

Most times one of the best ways to relieve stress is to focus on someone other than yourself; someone who might need your help and support. The YWAT believes that becoming an activist can be a great way to feel good about yourself and to feel like your life has meaning.

***Here are 7 easy steps to becoming an activist:***

1. Find an issue about which you are passionate. Don't be in a hurry to work on any campaign. Find something that you feel is especially important and that you will be interested to work on.
  2. Become well-informed. Utilize local resources such as libraries or look on the internet to research more about the issue. The more you know, the more information you can provide people to raise awareness and defend your ideas.
  3. Organize your plan of action. Whether you seek to complete this effort as an individual or with a group of people, having a clear strategy is helpful to successfully reach your goal.
  4. Raise awareness. Post flyers. Hang up banners. Make telephone calls. Send e-mails. Create websites. Talk to everyone you know and even those you don't. The more people know, the more support and allies you can garner to help you make a difference.
  5. Put your plan into motion and take action. There are several ways to voice your opinion and make an effort for change. Hold a protest. Circulate a petition. Create a zine. Sponsor a workshop. Write articles. Fundraise. Write letters to politicians. Organize a rally.
  6. Celebrate your victories. Acknowledging completed goals and successful events inspires supporters and volunteers to move forward and work on future campaigns. Celebrations allow you to remember that you can make a change and do influence your environment.
- Persevere. Don't quit until you feel you have completely accomplished your goal. Remember that success may take more than one event and several years to achieve. Don't lose faith in your beliefs.

*Adapted from a list written by Romina Oribello  
(in Abreast – the UCSD Women's Center Newsletter, Winter 2007 edition)*

## YWAT mission:

The YWAT is a youth-led, adult-supported social change project that empowers women to take action on issues that affect their lives (particularly issues of violence against girls and young women). The YWAT believes that girls and young women should be free from violence. We believe that through collective action, consciousness-raising, and organizing we can end violence against girls and young women.

**28.6% of young women surveyed have considered suicide.**

**47.4% of young women personally know between 1 and 5 girls and young women (under the age of 18) who have considered suicide. 8.2% personally know more than 10 girls and young women (under the age of 18) who have considered suicide!**

**SUICIDE IS NEVER THE ANSWER TO ANY PROBLEM.**

**It is a permanent solution to a temporary problem.**

**ASK FOR HELP when you need it.**

**This is what strong, smart people do!**

If you are having suicidal thoughts, don't wait.

Get help RIGHT NOW.

Call one of these 24-hour toll-free national hotlines:

*National Hopeline Network*

**1-800-SUICIDE  
(1-800-784-2433)**

For people who are depressed, suicidal, or concerned about someone they love. Connects callers to a certified crisis center and trained counselors.

*Girls and Boys Town National Hotline*

**1-800-448-3000**

A crisis, resource, and referral line. Call for advice on any issue – abuse, depression, suicide, identity struggles, family troubles, and other problems.

*Covenant House Nineline*

**1-800-999-9999**

[www.covenanthouse.org](http://www.covenanthouse.org)

Immediate crisis information, support, and referrals for runaways, abandoned youth, and those who are suicidal or in crisis. You can also email Nineline and a trained counselor will respond to your concerns online ASAP.

*The Trevor Helpline*

**1-866-488-7386**

A suicide prevention hotline for gay, lesbian, or questioning youth. For people in crisis and those who want to help someone in crisis.

The research in this report was conducted by YWAT Associate Members Amber Burwell, Briana Jackson, Adeola Matanmi, and Chelsea Whitis.

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The director of YWAT is Daphnee Rene. Lillian Matanmi is YWAT's assistant director. Learn more about YWAT at [www.youngwomensactionteam.org](http://www.youngwomensactionteam.org).