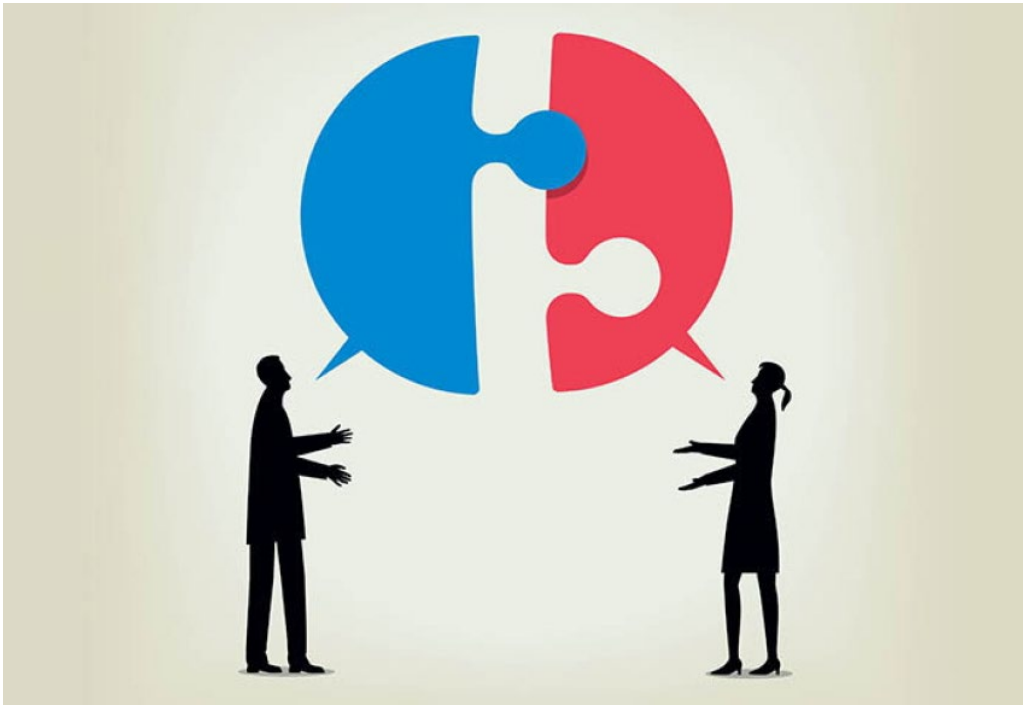


## Navigating Political Stress



The upcoming political season can cause feelings of anxiety and uneasiness. You may also find yourself in the middle of an uncomfortable conversation with differing political views. This week's [UR Medicine EAP Blog](#) provides tips, mindful strategies, and self-care techniques so you can manage its impact on your life. [UR Medicine EAP](#) is brought to you by [Well-University of Rochester](#), helping eligible individuals to assess issues and provide short-term counseling and referrals.

In today's climate, where political news seems to dominate every conversation and social media feed, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the constant bombardment of information and divisive language. Political stress can impact our mental health, relationships, and overall well-being. However, recognizing and managing this stress is crucial for maintaining a balanced and healthy life. Here's a guide to help you navigate the turbulent waters of political stress and find some peace, so you can manage its impact on your life.

### 1. Recognize the Sources of Stress

Before you can manage political stress, it's important to identify what's causing it. For many, stress stems from:

- **Information Overload:** Constant news updates and social media posts can be overwhelming.
- **Polarization:** Deep divisions in political views can lead to frustration and conflict.
- **Uncertainty:** Political instability or major decisions can create anxiety about the future.

## 2. Set Boundaries with Media Consumption

One of the most effective ways to manage political stress is to control your media consumption. Consider the following strategies:

- **Limit Exposure:** Designate specific times to check the news, rather than allowing it to intrude throughout the day.
- **Choose Reliable Sources:** Rely on reputable news sources and avoid commentary or biased outlets.
- **Digital Detox:** Take breaks from social media and news apps to give yourself mental space. There are apps on your smart phone to assist with setting time limits!

## 3. Engage in Constructive Dialogue

Rather than avoiding political discussions altogether, try to engage in constructive conversations:

- **Listen Actively:** Aim to understand different perspectives without immediately jumping into defense mode. It could be an opportunity to learn!
- **Stay Calm:** Practice patience and keep your emotions in check during discussions. Keep in mind, however, that if the conversation becomes heated, you are under no obligation to continue taking part in it. Try to change the subject or excuse yourself from the conversation. Take time away to calm yourself.
- **Focus on Common Ground:** Find shared values or goals to foster positive interactions.

## 4. Practice Self-Care and Mindfulness

Taking care of your mental and physical health is essential for managing stress. Here are some self-care practices to consider:

- **Exercise Regularly:** Physical activity helps reduce stress and improve your mood that ultimately provides a calming effect. Try moving your body for at least 30 minutes a day, even if it is for a walk outside.
- **Mindfulness and Meditation:** Techniques such as mindfulness and meditation can help center your thoughts and reduce anxiety. Perhaps try some deep breathing techniques or engage your senses to ground yourself in the here and now. Ask yourself what you see, hear, smell, taste, and feel to recenter your focus.
- **Healthy Lifestyle:** Eat a balanced diet, get adequate sleep, and avoid excessive use of caffeine and alcohol.

## 5. Get Involved in Positive Action

Channeling your energy into positive action can be empowering and alleviate feelings of helplessness:

- **Volunteer:** Get involved with community organizations or charities that align with your values. This could also be engaging in a small act of kindness to neighbors or others in need!
- **Advocate:** Support policies or initiatives that you believe in through advocacy or grassroots efforts.
- **Educate Yourself:** Stay informed about issues but focus on understanding them deeply rather than just skimming headlines.

## 6. Seek Support

Don't hesitate to seek support if political stress becomes overwhelming:

- **Talk to Friends and Family:** Share your feelings and experiences with trusted loved ones who can offer support and perspective. This can be a way to strengthen positive community values and shared identities.
- **Professional Help:** Consider seeking support with UR Medicine Employee Assistance Program or with a mental health professional if stress becomes unmanageable or affects your daily life.

## 7. Focus on What You Can Control

Ultimately, you can't control the political climate, but you can control how you respond to it.

Focus on:

- **Personal Growth:** Invest time in hobbies and interests that bring you joy. Try reading, gardening, crafts, carpentry, fishing, indulging in music, or baking!
- **Resilience:** Develop coping strategies that help you bounce back from stressful situations. This could be practicing gratitude, reframing challenges, and being kinder to ourselves.

### **More resources:**

Book recommendations: [\*Think Again by Adam Grant\*](#) and [\*The Way Out - How to Overcome Toxic Polarization by Peter Coleman\*](#)

Podcasts: [\*The Anxiety Coaches Podcast with Gina Ryan\*](#) and [\*10% Happier with Dan Harris\*](#)