



# Caring for Yourself During the Election Season

In the United States, our democratic political process is important, but it can be polarizing and affect us emotionally, even at work. What helps a friend or colleague may not be what you need, and that's okay. You can explore different approaches to find what strengthens or expands your current coping strategies.

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) offers various resources. You're welcome to reach out via email or phone to schedule a session with one of our counselors for individual support. Visit the [Counseling Services](#) page for more details.

## What is Political Stress?

Political stress refers to the emotional and psychological strain from political events, policies, and the broader political climate. Contentious elections, government decisions, and societal divisions driven by ideologies can heighten anxiety, frustration, and helplessness (Abrams, 2024).

## The Impacts of Political Stress

Unlike other stressors, political stress permeates both personal and professional life. It can strain relationships, deepen societal divisions, and foster feelings of isolation or conflict. Media coverage and public discourse, which shape political dynamics, also contribute to this stress. Since politics touches core values and identities, it often triggers strong emotional responses, increasing stress levels (American Psychological Association, 2024).

The Thriving Center of Psychology (2024) reports that 68% of Americans experience increased stress from political issues, and 59% feel these events harm their mental health. Social media and fast news cycles amplify stress by focusing on crises, leaving little space for reflection. Acknowledging the widespread nature of political stress can encourage proactive steps for maintaining mental health (Chatterjee, 2024).

## Strategies for Caring for Yourself During the Election Season

- **Routine Basic Needs Check-In:** Regularly evaluating your basic needs—movement, nutrition, hydration, nature, and sleep—is critical to managing stress. These factors directly impact stress levels and overall well-being ([American Psychological Association](#), 2018). Physical activity lowers stress, good nutrition and hydration support brain function, nature promotes calm, and sleep boosts emotional resilience. Meeting these needs builds a foundation for effectively handling political stress.



- **Normalize Your Emotions:** Political anxiety is a shared experience, especially during high-stakes events like presidential elections. Accepting that it is normal to have a range of emotions about political outcomes can help reduce self-blame or frustration
- **Focus on [What You Can Control](#):** Direct your energy toward areas where you can make a tangible impact, such as voting, staying informed, or personal [well-being](#), rather than fixating on broader political issues that may feel overwhelming and outside your direct influence. This approach helps reduce feelings of helplessness by promoting actionable steps and fostering a sense of empowerment.
- **Set Media Boundaries:** Constant exposure to news and social media can intensify political stress. Be mindful of when, how, and from where you consume political content. Set limits on media consumption to prevent emotional overload. This could mean checking updates only from specific sources, at specific times and avoiding excessive news consumption
- **Practice Mindful Self-Compassion:** Be gentle with yourself when political stress feels overwhelming. [Self-compassion](#) is essential for managing political anxiety because it helps you avoid harsh self-criticism, which can worsen stress. Reflect on [how you treat a friend](#) in difficult times versus how you treat yourself—often, we are far kinder to others. Offering yourself the same understanding and kindness you would extend to a friend can reduce stress, enhance emotional resilience, and create a healthier mindset for coping with political challenges.
- **Stay Socially Connected:** Feeling isolated during politically stressful times can heighten anxiety. [Connect with supportive people](#) to share your feelings, which can help you feel more understood and less alone. [Setting boundaries](#) around discussions with those who increase stress is also essential for maintaining mental well-being
- **Focus on Constructive Conversations:** Engage in political conversations that are respectful and fact-based, focusing on shared values rather than conflict. [Understanding differing perspectives](#) without escalating tensions can foster mutual respect while reducing emotional burnout
- **Know Your Limits:** It's okay to [take a break](#) from political discussions, especially when they become overwhelming. Knowing when to step away can help protect your mental health. Focus on what you can control, such as your actions and decisions, while giving yourself permission to disengage from unproductive debates.
- **Empower Yourself Through Strengths and Values:** Identifying your [strengths and values](#) can help you cope with feelings of disempowerment. Engage in activities or causes that align with your values, fostering a sense of purpose. Local or community-level engagement can offer direct, tangible impacts, reducing feelings of helplessness

- **Embrace Gratitude:** Shift your focus from the negative aspects of politics to the positive elements in your life or community. For example, keeping a daily gratitude journal where you note things you appreciate, such as supportive relationships or positive community news, can help reduce stress by emphasizing what is good and stable in your world. This practice fosters a sense of well-being and resilience despite political challenges.
- **Engage with relaxation practices:** Explore [calming techniques](#) such as meditation, deep breathing, visualization, progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness, prayer, music, or pleasure reading.

## Handouts

- [Intentionally Coping Well in Times of Stress](#)
- [Container Imagery](#)
- [Grounding Techniques](#)
- [Resources for Nourishing our Nervous System](#)

## Meditation

Mindfulness practices are simple yet powerful techniques to increase our connection to our immediate experience. These practices have very practical benefits in our lives such as improved concentration, increased energy, and better overall mood. EAP offers guided mindfulness practices via Zoom each Tuesday at 5pm-5:15pm and on Wednesdays from 12pm-12:15pm. Join us to feel more fully aware and present in the moments of everyday life. Sign up now for [Mindful Meditation](#) through UT Learn.

## Articles

- [Approaching Politics: Calm Your Mind, Then Take on The World](#)
- [Eight Questions That Can Help You Survive Election Stress](#)
- [Election Stress: It's Okay to Not Feel Okay—Tips for Coping](#)
- [Politics Without Panic - Election Season Survival Guide](#)
- [Election-stress; Tips to Manage Anxious Feelings About Politics](#)
- [Politics: Be Informed but Not Obsessed](#)