

# Coping with Noise-Induced Stress

By Barbara Kurland, RN,C

Together, we are changing the political situation. In the meantime, is there anything we can do personally to help ourselves cope?

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*Stress takes a toll on our bodies. Chronic stress can lead to chronic illnesses. Noise pollution—the noise from the Growlers—activates the body's stress response*

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**Support Groups:** gather with friends or others in your community affected by the noise. Exchange tips on how to manage the noise. Avoid ranting and monologues in favor of dialogue and shared personal experiences.

**Therapy:** if you suffer from mental illness or mild anxiety, noise will aggravate your symptoms. A therapist can help you manage symptoms that have become overwhelming.

**Distraction:** when the Growlers are flying, use distraction techniques. Instead of focusing on the noise and your aggravation, use headphones to listen to pleasant sounds (soothing music or ocean waves). Get involved in an activity that requires focus: sports, making art, physical exercise.

**Radical Acceptance:** accepting what is at the time it is occurring grounds you. Thoughts of trying to change the situation, or angry rants, only intensifies the stress. You don't have to like it, or be cool with it; just say to yourself: "Right now, this is what it is." Stay focused on the present rather than fantasizing about the future or rehashing the past.



**Immerse Yourself in Nature:** experience nature as much as you can. Even when the skies are noisy, nature—clouds, water, trees, fields—has a calming effect.

**Meditate:** learn to meditate and maintain a daily practice of up to 30 minutes a day, even if it is ten minutes at a time. Meditation has been proven to reduce stress.

**Breathing Awareness:** Sit comfortably in a quiet room and become aware of your breathing. Count to 4 as you inhale through your nose, count to 2 while holding your breath, count to 6 as you slowly exhale through your puckered lips (like you're going to whistle). Do

this four times, then breath normally, but maintain your focus on your breath (you may count breaths if you like). Do breath awareness exercises several times a day.

**Exercise and Healthy Eating:** physical exercise (even just walking 30 minutes a day) and healthy eating (whole foods rather than packaged foods made with preservatives, additives, chemicals, too much sugar, fat, salt) combats the effects of stress on the body.



**Noise Blocking During Sleep:** if noise occurs at night while you're

trying to sleep, use ear plugs, white noise, soothing music, meditation sleep tapes, or other means to block it out.

**Avoid Stressors:** alcohol, caffeine, junk food, negative thinking, ranting. They all exacerbate stress.



**Take Action:** Action is an antidote to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. Write a letter to the editor about your experiences with the noise; send postcards to your elected officials urging them to do something about the noise pollution; join a community event to bring about change. There's satisfaction to be gained in solidarity with others.

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*Barbara Kurland is a retired Clinical Specialist in Psychiatric Nursing. She has 40 years of experience and has worked with mentally ill criminals, in addiction medicine, juvenile corrections, adult inpatient and outpatient, voluntary and involuntary treatment. She used Cognitive Behavioral and Dialectical Behavioral Therapies in individual and group sessions to help clients manage emotional distress.*