

Dealing with



Stress!

Tips for coping and
stress-busting techniques.

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DEALING WITH STRESS

Stress is an outcome of modern life that may be impossible to avoid. Some people thrive on the adrenaline of a busy lifestyle and constant crisis. Others feel tense at the slightest deviation from their normal routine. Most people fall somewhere between these two extremes. We all need some amount of stress to keep us functioning normally. A stress free life would be too dull to tolerate. When feelings of pressure or tension begin to affect the quality of our lives, then it's time to see what you can do to repair the damage. Short bursts of stress are not usually dangerous. Our bodies are designed to cope with stress by releasing adrenaline and other stress-related hormones to allow us to deal with the immediate problem. Chronic stress can contribute to health problems such as: insomnia, irritable bowel syndrome, migraine headaches and heart attacks if it's allowed to continue for too long. Learning to recognize when you're feeling stressed is an important step in the process of dealing with stress. The following are some symptoms to watch for.

SYMPTOMS OF STRESS

- Having a difficult time concentrating on what you're doing.
- Feeling irritable
- Always feeling that something has to be done and that you can't simply sit and relax.
- Inability to make decisions.
- Difficulty sleeping properly.
- Drinking excess caffeine or alcohol.
- Increase in smoking.
- An inability swallowing food properly-it feels like the food gets stuck in your throat.
- A rapid pulse for no apparent reason.
- Constipation or diarrhea.
- Chest pains or palpitations.
- Thoughts of harming yourself.
- Having dramatic mood swings.
- Constantly feeling guilty.
- Clenching and unclenching your fist or jaw.
- Grinding your teeth.
- Overeating.
- Loss of appetite.

STRESS-BUSTING TECHNIQUES

Practice deep-breathing techniques such as slowly inhaling while counting to five; hold your breath for five seconds, then slowly breathe out. Repeat this ten times during stressful situations. You may want to smile when you exhale. As you do this let your shoulders drop and relax your hands.

Stretch the muscles of your neck and shoulders by keeping your shoulder level and trying to touch each shoulder with your ear. Look up at the ceiling and then down at the floor, then rotate each shoulder in a wide circle. Repeat this five times. Open and close your jaw widely after each time since stress often causes tenseness in the jaw area.

Try to ‘shut down’ for five minutes out of every hour and think of nothing but a perfect situation you’d like to be in. This could be your dream vacation, ideal partner or favorite activity. You could also think of a wonderful experience you’ve had. Close your eyes and let the feelings you experienced wash over you. You’ll be surprised at how this can lower stress levels.

Talking with someone who is a good listener can help release built up stress. It can also help y to see the situation more accurately and to clear your mind for sensible action.

Exercise regularly. Even walking briskly several times a week will help to reduce stress and to promote restful sleep. Experts note that exercise is effective in burning off the excess adrenaline that fuels feelings of anxiety and stress. It also releases endorphins-the body's natural chemicals that block anxiety and pain.

De-clutter. Mess creates confusion and causes a feeling of loss of power. If you clean up a messy home or car, you'll instantly feel more in control.

Take action. Eliminate or change stressful situations by saying no more often and becoming more assertive in meeting your needs.

Schedule your recreation. For those who drive themselves so hard that they don't allow themselves time for recreation, it helps to schedule definite hours for having

fun. It's important to schedule activities that you can completely throw yourself into.

Think positive thoughts put into words. Repeating a phrase such as: 'I am a loving and much loved person,' can work wonders. Say it and believe it and it will become true.

Do something for others. That will take your mind off yourself and can take the steam out of your own worries. It also creates the satisfaction of having helped someone else.

Retreat before you lose control, to allow you and others to calm down. You'll be in a better position to deal more constructively with the problem after you cool down.

Give others a break. If you are not a threat to others, they are likely to stop being a threat to you.

Occasionally give in and be willing to compromise. If you give in, you'll find that others do too.

Work off your anger. Do something constructive with your pent-up anger,

instead of lashing out at the person who has provoked you. Things that can help are: taking a walk, playing tennis or another sport, working in the yard, or working on a hobby.

Take one thing at a time. When you're feeling tense, an ordinary workload may seem overwhelming. Realize the situation is temporary. Make a list of the things that must be done and rank them in order of importance. Tackle them one at a time, then cross each thing you've accomplished off the list.

Avoid the "Super-Human" impulse. If you strive for perfection in everything, you'll inevitably end up in a constant state of worry, anxiety and failure. Give yourself a break and allow yourself to be human.

Make yourself available. Instead of waiting for someone else to make the first move, sometimes make the first move yourself.

Look for the humor around you. Try to see the amusing side of things that happen in everyday life.

When you see something that tickles your funny bone, jot it down. This will help you to capture the moment, so you can recapture it again later.

Become aware of your stressors and your bodies reaction to them, rather than ignoring them.

Recognize what you can change. Can you change your stressors by avoiding them or eliminating them completely? Can you reduce their intensity or shorten your exposure to the stress by taking a break from the situation?

Develop some mutually supportive friendships/relationships.

Pursue goals that are meaningful to you, rather than goals others have for you that you do not share.

Expect some frustrations, failures and sorrows.

Just say “No.” You don’t have to accept every project or invitation to become involved. A simple “No, thank you,” to requests for your time is better than overloading yourself with so much activity

that you don't have time to relax or enjoy life.

Listening to relaxing music can take you from a highly tense state to a relaxed state in a very short time. Soothing music has been shown to provide real health benefits like lowering blood pressure and increasing immune function.

Remember, you get to make mistakes. Everyone does ... so ease up on yourself.

Eat well-balanced, nutritious meals. Delicious and healthy food can reduce stress by stabilizing your blood sugar levels and supporting good health.

Get enough sleep. Be as consistent with your sleep schedule as possible.

Try aromatherapy. Pleasing scents have been proven to reduce stress. You can use candles, sprays, scented oils or lotions to make your environment more relaxing.

Always be kind and gentle with yourself - be a friend to yourself.

For more information on
dealing with stress

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