



Methods for Minimizing Stress

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1. Strengthen your resistance to stress

- Exercise daily or every other day--strenuous enough to increase your heart rate for 20 minutes; weight bearing exercise helps reduce the chances of osteoporosis.
- Listen to your body and feelings for signs of stress
- Get adequate rest; practice good “Sleep Hygiene”
- Value proper nutrition and make it part of your daily routine

2. Slow down. Break “Type A” habits

- Speak and eat more slowly
- Reduce your feelings of competition with others. There is enough in the universe for all of us. Each of us has unique gifts.
- Listen to feelings of fatigue; find a way to rest or reduce your goals
- Do one thing at a time

3. Re-appraise your schedule and habits

- Don't overcrowd your schedule – allow enough time to get places, and time to reflect
- Avoid negative people, places and things whenever you can
- Allow time for friends and socializing you enjoy

4. Build enjoyment into your schedule

- Make a list of activities you find relaxing and design your week to include some of them i.e.

Reading

TV

Physical activity

Listening to music

Planning vacations

Playing a musical instrument

Getting together with friends

Movie/theatre

Leisurely drive

Letter/journal writing

Hobbies

Museums/cultural activities

Taking a hot bath

Gardening

5. Practice being assertive
 - Assertiveness is not aggressiveness, avoid being hostile or angry in letting others know what you want
 - Say “no” to requests that are excessive, or agree to part of a task that is manageable. Saying “no” is a way of saying yes to yourself
 - Give yourself time to think about new commitments before agreeing

6. Make use of relaxation exercises
 - Progressive muscle relaxation
 - Meditation
 - Deep breathing
 - Visualization

7. Improve your environment at work and at home
 - Create a comfortable space around you in places you spend most of your time
 - Reduce noise levels
 - Reduce clutter

8. Use methods of “letting go”, resist trying to control situations
 - Prayer
 - Remind self in worrisome situations that “this too shall pass”
 - Notice when things work themselves out, without your control

9. Avoid passive, habit-forming ways to escape from stress
 - Gambling
 - Alcohol and other drug abuse
 - Shopping
 - Excessive sleep
 - Procrastination

10. Use professional help in times of high or prolonged stress
 - Counseling can clarify problems and choices through dialogue with an objective person. Talking about one’s feelings help reduce anxiety and makes alternatives apparent.

11. Strive to time-manage
 - We can all benefit from examining what types of tasks take up the majority of our time; how stated priorities actually match up to where we spend our time.
 - Delegate tasks when the opportunity is available

12. Build a support network

- Spend time with people who understand your day to day stress.
- Find places to meet new friends if old ones have grown distant or developed new interests
- Be open with people—ask friends for support when you feel especially stressed

13. Finish “unfinished business” with people and tasks

- Harboring anger and resentments from incidents experienced years or months ago uses up psychic energy, and takes away from our ability to be present to enjoy the moment
- Make amends where necessary. If not possible, talk with a neutral third party
- Long unfinished tasks will similarly nag us. Reevaluate whether the task is a high priority, and make a decision to do it or drop it. Make your decision known to others. This helps you keep your commitment.

14. Set reasonable goals for yourself

- Explore the reasons you hold unreasonable high expectations for yourself
- Examine whether the outcome is worth the price you pay in stress related symptoms: irritability, exhaustion, resentment, preoccupation, distraction, jealousy of other who are less stressed

15. Avoid making several changes at once

- Many stress related illnesses develop at times when many life changes are happening simultaneously. While we often have no control over this, there are circumstances where we can decide to keep some parts of our life stable in anticipation of other major disruptions.

16. Make a contract to do something about your stress

- Of all the issues listed above, decide which ones you immediately change, and which will become longer range goals
- Make a commitment to yourself and to others who see your stress to make changes. Making a commitment in the presence of others strengthens our motivation.