

STRESS MANAGEMENT TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Working on your problems

Taking steps to deal with your problems will make you feel better able to cope with them.

Top tips include:

- Dividing problems into smaller bite sized pieces and dealing with them one at a time.
- Trying to deal with problems as they arise so that they don't get worse.
- Prioritizing what has to be dealt with now and what can wait.

Talk about it

You don't have to solve every problem on your own. Sometimes you need help. Talking about your feelings can be the first step towards dealing with things.

Many of us find it hard to start talking about difficult problems. Sometimes it's embarrassing to talk about feelings- and sometimes we don't actually know exactly what's wrong, but sharing a problem can ease stress, even if you can't find an answer straight away.

Relationships

They're a source of support and help keep us happy and well. But when relationships go wrong, they can cause lots of stress.

Strong relationships rely on good communication, whether they're with friends, partners or family members. Set aside regular time to talk through important issues and let each other know how you're feeling.

Thinking straight

Stress can make us think irrationally. If we're worrying about our problems all the time, we might start expecting the worst, become more pessimistic, and may blow things out of proportion.

Think about these questions in light of your own worries:

- What's the worst that could happen?
- What if someone else I know was in my shoes. What would they do? How would they react?
- Are my thoughts based on real facts? Is there another way to think about things?

Being optimistic can be hard when you're in the middle of a difficult situation, but trying to sort out fact from fiction in your head might help you think more clearly and cut worries down to size.

Planning ahead

Stressful times are sometimes unavoidable. Planning ahead can help us cope better. Learn to say "no".

- It's easy to keep saying 'yes' - especially to friends, family and work colleagues.
- You can't do everything and look after yourself. Be realistic about how much spare time & energy you have.

3 Basic Stress Management Methods

1. Instant Relief From Stress.

If you want to be relieved of stress right away, you can do so with the help of some *fast-acting techniques*. Generally, they are used to quickly lower down stress levels, but when you practice these techniques on a regular basis, they are bound to have long-lasting positive effects. Some of the most common instant stress relievers are the following:

- Breathing Exercises
- Meditation
- Classical Music
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)
- Yoga
- Guided Imagery / Visualizations

2. Healthy Lifestyle.

Given that stress is unavoidable, we must try hard to fortify our defenses against it. One way to effectively do so is by adopting a healthy lifestyle. Studies have shown that people who have unhealthy lifestyle practices take in stress harder and are more prone to suffer from its detrimental effects. On the other hand, stress has little effects on healthy individuals. Here are some practices you should adopt if you want to be more resilient to stress' negative effects:

- Eat Healthy
- Get enough sleep
- Engage in some form of regular physical activity
- Enjoy a healthy sex life

3. Maintaining The Right Attitude

The effects of stress on you have a lot to do with your attitude and the way you perceive your life's events. Here are some practices to help you maintain a stress-relieving attitude:

- Stay positive
- Stop aiming for perfection
- Attract positive energy
- Maintain a good sense of humor
- Let go of your past resentments and failure
- Have fun

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

One method of reducing muscle tension that people have found helpful is through a technique called Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). In progressive muscle relaxation exercises, you tense up particular muscles and then relax them, and then you practice this technique consistently.

Relaxation Sequence

1. **Right hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your right hand.
2. **Right upper arm.** Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to "make a muscle".
3. **Left hand and forearm.**
4. **Left upper arm.**
5. **Forehead.** Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something.
6. **Eyes and cheeks.** Squeeze your eyes tight shut.
7. **Mouth and jaw.** Open your mouth as wide as you can, as you might when you're yawning.
8. **Neck.** Be careful as you tense these muscles. Face forward and then pull your head back slowly, as though you are looking up to the ceiling.
9. **Shoulders.** Tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
10. **Shoulder blades/Back.** Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward.
11. **Chest and stomach.** Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air.
12. **Hips and buttocks.** Squeeze your buttock muscles
13. **Right upper leg.** Tighten your right thigh.
14. **Right lower leg.** Do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle.
15. **Right foot.** Curl your toes downwards.
16. **Left upper leg.** Repeat as for right upper leg.
17. **Left lower leg.** Repeat as for right lower leg.
18. **Left foot.** Repeat as for right foot.

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING INSTRUCTIONS

Step 1:

Lie down on your back on a flat surface or in bed, with your knees bent and your head supported.

You can use a pillow under your knees for support if you want.

Step 2:

Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage.

This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.

Step 3:

Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand.

The hand on your chest should remain as still as possible.

Step 4:

Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips.

The hand on your upper chest must remain as still as possible.

Step 5:

You can also do this technique while sitting in a chair.

Sit comfortably in a chair with your knees bent. Your shoulders, head, and neck should be relaxed.

Step 6:

Place one hand on your upper chest and your other hand just below your rib cage. Breathe in slowly through your nose so you can feel your stomach move out against your hand.

The hand on your chest must remain as still as possible

Step 7:

To breathe out, tighten your stomach muscles. Let them fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips.

Continue to keep the hand on your chest as still as possible.

Step 8:

Do this for 5-10 minutes at a time.

The hand on your upper chest must remain as still as possible.