

10 Tips to Manage Stress

These days it's hard not to get overwhelmed once in a while. Between juggling work, family, and other commitments, you can become too stressed out and busy. But you need to set time aside to unwind or your mental and physical health can suffer.

Learning how to manage your stress takes practice, but you can -- and need to -- do it. Here are 10 ways to make it easier.

1. Exercise

Working out regularly is one of the best ways to relax your body and mind. Plus, exercise will improve your mood. But you have to do it often for it to pay off.

So how much should you exercise every week?

- **Good:** At the very least, 3 to 5 times for 30 minutes
- **Better:** 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderately intense exercise like brisk walks
- **Best:** Add 75 minutes of a vigorous exercise like swimming laps, jogging, or other sports that gets your heart rate up

Focus on setting fitness goals you can meet so you don't give up. Most of all remember that doing any exercise is better than none at all.

2. Relax Your Muscles

When you're stressed, your muscles get tense. You can help loosen them up on your own and refresh your body by:

- Stretching
- Enjoying a massage
- Taking a hot bath or shower
- Getting a good night's sleep

3. Deep Breathing

Stopping and taking a few deep breaths can take the pressure off you right away. You'll be surprised how much better you feel once you get good at it. Just follow these 5 steps:

1. Sit in a comfortable position with your hands in your lap and your feet on the floor. Or you can lie down.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Imagine yourself in a relaxing place. It can be on the beach, in a beautiful field of grass, or anywhere that gives you a peaceful feeling.
4. Slowly take deep breaths in and out.
5. Do this for 5 to 10 minutes at a time.

4. Eat Well

Eating a regular, well-balanced diet will help you feel better in general. It may also help control your moods. Your meals should be full of vegetables, fruit, whole grains, and lean protein for energy. And don't skip any. It's not good for you and can put you in a bad mood, which can actually increase your stress.

5. Slow Down

Modern life is so busy, and sometimes we just need to slow down and chill out. Look at your life and find small ways you can do that. For example:

- Set your watch 5 to 10 minutes ahead. That way you'll get places a little early and avoid the stress of being late.
- When you're driving on the highway, switch to the slow lane so you can avoid road rage.
- Break down big jobs into smaller ones. For example, don't try to answer all 100 emails if you don't have to -- just answer a few of them.

6. Take a Break

You need to plan on some real downtime to give your mind time off from stress. If you're a person who likes to set goals, this may be hard for you at first. But stick with it and you'll look forward to these moments. Restful things you can do include:

- Meditation
- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Prayer
- Listening to your favorite music
- Spending time in nature

7. Make Time for Hobbies

You need to set aside time for things you enjoy. Try to do something every day that makes you feel good, and it will help relieve your stress. It doesn't have to be a ton of time -- even 15 to 20 minutes will do. Relaxing hobbies include things like:

- Reading
- Knitting
- Doing an art project
- Playing golf
- Watching a movie
- Doing puzzles
- Playing cards and board games

8. Talk About Your Problems

If things are bothering you, talking about them can help lower your stress. You can talk to family members, friends, a trusted clergyman, your doctor, or a therapist.

And you can also talk to yourself. It's called self-talk and we all do it. But in order for self-talk to help reduce stress you need to make sure it's positive and not negative.

So listen closely to what you're thinking or saying when you're stressed out. If you're giving yourself a negative message, change it to a positive one. For example, don't tell yourself "I can't do this." Tell yourself instead: "I can do this," or "I'm doing the best I can."

9. Go Easy On Yourself

Accept that you can't do things perfectly no matter how hard you try. You also can't control everything in your life. So do yourself a favor and stop thinking you can do so much. And don't forget to keep up your sense of humor. Laughter goes a long way towards making you feel relaxed.

10. Eliminate Your Triggers

Figure out what are the biggest causes of stress in your life. Is it your job, your commute, your schoolwork? If you're able to identify what they are, see if you're able to eliminate them from your life, or at least reduce them.

If you can't identify the main causes of your stress, try keeping a stress journal. Make note of when you become most anxious and see if you can determine a pattern, then find ways to remove or lessen those triggers.

WebMD Medical Reference Reviewed by Smitha Bhandari, MD on November 26, 2018

<https://www.webmd.com/balance/guide/tips-to-control-stress#1>