

## Dealing with Stress

Below are 30 suggestions for dealing with stress. Some may be more helpful for you than others. Try them all, or simply choose a few you think might help. Give yourself a pat on the back if you recognize strategies you are already using.

1. Laugh a lot. Research shows that when people laugh, it is often therapeutic. Work on developing your sense of humour.
2. Take action on nagging problems. If, for example, you are worried about lung cancer, consider quitting smoking.
3. Honestly evaluate your abilities. People sometimes overestimate their abilities and expect too much of themselves. Make the best use of your abilities.
4. Learn to feel comfortable with talking about problems. A close confidant is a valuable resource (though avoid unloading on the same person all the time). A ground rule is that you have to be there also when the other person needs help and support.
5. When stuck in traffic or in a line, use the time to be by yourself rather than fuming over the frustration. Visualize a more peaceful, tranquil situation. Focus on deep breathing.
6. Try non-competitive play. Visit a museum or read a novel.
7. When feeling stressed, inhale deeply through your nose, slowly exhale through your mouth. Repeat 5-10 times. Oxygen relaxes the body.
8. Accept that things sometimes are out of your control.
9. Get physical. Gardening can be as helpful as vigorous exercise.
10. Take a daily music break – with eyes closed sit back and listen for 10 minutes of soothing sounds.
11. Stressful events are in the eyes of the beholder and are subject to the possibility of misperception. Can you change your perception to alter your stress level?
12. Don't put off high priority tasks by doing low priority jobs because they are easy. Neglecting high priorities can lead to a crisis.
13. Deal with negative thoughts by using emotional strength. Positive thinking helps. Be an optimist.
14. Avoid business lunches. Lunch time should be a psychological break, a time to balance out morning and afternoon.
15. Avoid chronic hurriedness. High stress personalities try to do too many things too fast. Tell yourself to slow down. Develop good judgment and decision-making, not speed.
16. After work, try a glass of iced water (or hot tea) along with 10 minutes of quiet time with relaxed, closed eyes.
17. Take notice of things that chronically bother you and avoid them. Work on developing awareness to the stressors in your life.
18. If you've been working 60 hour work weeks, cut back. Research shows that productivity drops among people under high stress, but peaks under moderate stress.

19. Work at building a few supportive relationships. Remember friendship takes time. Those with supportive relationships suffer fewer consequences under stress than the socially isolated.
20. Give in when you have little to gain. Save your energy for what is important.
21. Cut back on caffeine as it is a stimulant.
22. If little things bother you a lot, dig deep for the reasons. Molehills may mask mountains of problems. If something major is causing stress, seek support to help with problem resolution. On the other hand, if what is bothering you are little issues, try the attitude “don’t sweat the small stuff.”
23. When you’re uptight, tense and relax muscle groups (see *Progressive Muscle Relaxation* exercise).
24. Work on developing the capacity to recognize when you are under stress. Clue into how you feel and what you are thinking. Listen to your body. If you don’t recognize the stress you are under, you’ll never deal with it.
25. If a stressful event is approaching, visualize yourself doing it well and in a relaxed manner. Visualization works!
26. When you arrive home from work and need to unwind, explain to your partner and or family that you need some time to yourself before working through family issues and responsibilities. If explained, you may be able to create a space for yourself between work and home responsibilities.
27. Studies show that vigorous exercise - even brisk walking for half an hour - is as good as a chemical tranquilizer.
28. Try to make work and living areas as pleasant and comfortable as possible with pictures, plants, and ornaments.
29. Don’t try to control family members. Be supportive instead of nagging. If you are less stressed, they will be too.
30. Take a warm shower or bath to soothe tense muscles and provide a few moments of “sensory deprivation” (also known as “me-time!”).

Finally, use this list and other strategies to develop a repertoire of techniques for dealing with stresses in life. Who said life was going to be easy? View dealing with stresses in life with grace as a goal.