

Tips for Reducing Stress in Your Life

by Mary Calvagna, MS



Stress—we've all felt it at one time or another. But many people feel stress often; some even feel it as a part of their daily lives. Stress can contribute to numerous conditions, including [coronary artery disease](#), [stroke](#), immune disorders, gastrointestinal problems such as [irritable bowel syndrome](#) and inflammatory bowel disease, eating problems, [diabetes](#), sleep disturbances, and sexual reproduction dysfunction. Learning to reduce your stress can help you live happier, healthier, and maybe even longer.

The National Mental Health Association offers the following tips for reducing or controlling stress:

Be Realistic

Don't take on everything; learn to say no. Set realistic goals for yourself. If you are feeling overwhelmed, try eliminating an activity that is not absolutely necessary. Ask yourself, "What really needs to be done? Is the deadline realistic?" No one is perfect, so do not expect perfection from yourself or others. And ask for help if you need it.

Meditate

It only takes about 10–20 minutes to get a benefit from meditating. These few moments of quiet reflection may bring relief from stress as well as increase your tolerance to it. And it is simple to do: sit quietly, listen to peaceful music, relax, and try and think of pleasant things or think of nothing.

Visualize TOP

Take a moment to picture how you can manage a stressful situation more calmly and successfully. This can work with just about anything, whether it is an important presentation at work or moving to a new place or taking an exam. A visual rehearsal can boost self-confidence and help you have a more positive attitude toward a difficult task.

Slow Down TOP

When you start to feel overwhelmed, try taking one task at a time. Make a list of things you need to do. Put the most urgent task at the top. Once you have accomplished it, cross it off and move on to the next one. The positive feeling of crossing things off can help keep you motivated.

Be Active TOP

Regular exercise is a great way to reduce stress, and it benefits the body as well as the mind. Just 20-30 minutes of physical activity a day can do the trick.

Get Involved in Hobbies TOP

Take a break from the stressors of life and do something you really enjoy. Try gardening, painting, or reading. Schedule time to indulge your interests.

Practice a Healthful Lifestyle TOP

Eating healthfully will make a difference. Avoiding things like smoking, excessive alcohol, and caffeine will help as well. Make sure you get adequate rest and exercise, and that you balance work and play.

Talk TOP

Talking about things can help you feel better. A conversation with someone can help you relax. And listening to someone else can take the focus off of yourself—something we all need to do every now and then. Stay in touch with your family and friends; don't try to cope alone.

Give in Occasionally TOP

You don't always have to be right. Be flexible. Be willing to compromise. If you do, others may meet you halfway. If you know you are right, stand your ground, but be calm and rational. Make sure you listen and make allowances for other's opinions.

Let Go of Perfection TOP

When you expect too much from yourself or others, you may end up feeling frustrated, let down, and disappointed. Remember that each person, including yourself, has shortcomings. But you also have beautiful qualities to share with the world.