

HOW TO RELAX AND MANAGE STRESS

If you're not practicing some form of stress management, you will sabotage your best efforts with diet, exercise, and overall wellness. It is that essential. Of course, stress is an inevitable part of life and isn't all bad. It's when the amount of stress you experience exceeds your ability to cope that stress wreaks havoc on your mental, emotional, and physical health. Since you can't avoid all stress in life, try minimizing the impact of stress using the tips below.



Schedule time for you! It's not selfish! Making you a priority and taking time for yourself helps you to be the best mother/father, partner, family member, friend, employee, and person you can be. This might sound obvious, and yet it is often overlooked.

Learn to say, "No." Know your limits and be aware of over-committing yourself.

Clean up your relationships. Avoid people who stress you out. Limit your time with people who might be prone to drama or conflict, if you can't avoid them entirely.

Turn off the news, or limit your exposure. Much of the media coverage today is sensationalized. Try looking for more neutral sources of news.

Give up pointless arguments. Winning arguments, having to be "*right*," and having the last word means little if your health and wellness are compromised. Learn to let go.

Limit your to-do list. Ask yourself which items on your list are essential and see if you can cross anything off your list or delegate items to others.

Reduce your exposure to online stress. Schedule time for checking social media and connecting with people online. Otherwise, turn it off!

Reframe the situation. Change your perspective. For example, if you're stuck in traffic, opt for enjoying a podcast or using the time as an opportunity for contemplation and solitude.

Lower your expectations and standards. Let good be good enough. Perfection is not a virtue.

Practice acceptance. Learn to accept reality and the things you can't change or control.

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Be grateful. Try keeping a gratitude journal and writing down three things each day that you are grateful for and why.

Cultivate empathy. Realize that everyone has a lot going on, experiences stress, and is doing their best. Practice "Loving Kindness" meditation as a way to grow your empathy for others and you!

Manage your time. Setting careful boundaries for your time can be helpful.

Create a stress management/relaxation practice. There are a number of different clinically proven ways to manage stress, such as meditation or mindfulness, yoga, deep breathing, massage, or biofeedback.

Make sleep a priority. Create a bedtime and sleep routine that includes scheduling 7-8 hours of sleep, creating a cool, relaxing bedroom environment, reducing your exposure to light, especially blue lights from screens, using blackout shades, not eating before bedtime, and avoiding stimulants, such as caffeine.

Go outside. Aim for 15 to 20 minutes of midday sun exposure (without sunscreen) two to three days each week.

Spend time in nature. Try to walk or exercise in nature, including urban parks and green spaces, a minimum of twice each week. Put plants in your home and workspace. If you have outdoor space, plant a simple garden.

Play more. Try adding more play into your life. Think about what you enjoyed as a kid and see if you can bring that joy back into your life.

Move and exercise. In appropriate amounts, movement and exercise are positive stressors that can promote healthy adaptations that make the body stronger and more resilient.

Managing stress and adding more relaxation into our lifestyle is possible. I recommend selecting one of the tips I've listed to get started. Begin where you are. Take it slow and with compassion. Create one new stress management and relaxation habit at a time. Give it time. Notice how you feel. Let me know how it goes.



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