

Stress...

Simple Steps to End Distress

One of the most effective stress-reducers: a brisk, 10- to 30-minute walk.

Stress is what happens to your body when any “pleasant” or “unpleasant” demand is placed on it. Although we can’t avoid stress altogether (and we wouldn’t want to), we can learn how to keep its distress to a minimum.

Stress Basics

MYTH # 1

Only unpleasant situations are stressful.

Winning the lottery can be as stressful as losing your job; and falling in love can be as stressful as breaking up. If change is involved, whether it’s “positive” or “negative,” stress is involved.

MYTH # 2

What’s stressful to me is stressful to you.

Situations are rarely stressful in and of themselves. What causes one person to “flip out” might not even ruffle another. Stress is not something “out there”; it’s something we create. It depends on how we interpret situations and how we relate to the world around us. The good news is that if your mind creates stress, then your mind can decrease stress.

MYTH # 3

In the ideal world, there wouldn’t be any stress.

Too little stress (boredom) can make us as miserable as too much stress. Everyone has an optimal level of stress (such as life change). One of the secrets of happiness is determining how much stress is enough and how much is too much.

35 Sure-Fire Stress-Reducers

1. Go to bed on time.
2. Get up on time so you can start the day unrushed.
3. Say “no” to projects that won’t fit into your time schedule or that will compromise your mental health.
4. Delegate simple tasks to capable others.
5. Simplify and unclutter your life.
6. Less is more. (Although one is often not enough, two are often too many.)
7. Allow extra time to do things and to get to places.
8. Pace yourself. Spread out big changes and difficult projects over time; don’t lump the hard things all together.
9. Take one day at a time.
10. Separate worries from concerns. If a situation is a concern, do what you can do and let go of the anxiety. If you can’t do anything about a situation, forget it.
11. Live within your budget; don’t use credit cards for ordinary purchases.
12. Have backups; an extra car key in your wallet, an extra house key buried in the garden, extra stamps, and such.
13. K.M.S. (Keep Mouth Shut) This single piece of advice can prevent an enormous amount of trouble.
14. Do something for the kid in you every day.
15. Carry a paperback with you to read while waiting in lines.
16. Get enough exercise.
17. Eat right.
18. Get organized so everything has its place.
19. Listen to relaxing music while driving.
20. Write things down.
21. Every day, find time to be alone.

22. Having problems? Join a support group and/or see a counselor. Try to nip small problems in the bud.
23. Make friends with happy, non-stressed people.
24. Keep a folder of favorite cartoons on hand.
25. Remember that the shortest bridge between despair and hope is often a good night's sleep.
26. Laugh.
27. Laugh some more!
28. Take your work seriously, but yourself not at all.
29. Develop a forgiving attitude (most people are doing the best they can).
30. Be kind to unkind people (they probably need it the most).
31. Sit on your ego.
32. Talk less; listen more.
33. Slow down.
34. Remind yourself that you are not the general manager of the universe.
35. Every night before bed, think of one thing you're grateful for that you've never been grateful for before.

Forget About It!

Finish every day and be done with it.
 You have done what you could.
 Some blunders and absurdities no doubt crept in;
 forget them as soon as you can.
 Tomorrow is a new day;
 begin it well and serenely
 and with too high a spirit
 to be encumbered with
 your old nonsense.

This day is all that is
 good and fair.
 It is too dear,
 with its hopes and invitations,
 to waste a moment on the yesterdays.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

Signs that Could Mean Too Much Stress

- Dry mouth
- Headache
- Sighing
- Confusion
- Nightmares
- Indigestion
- Skin problems
- Hypochondria
- Clammy hands
- Ready tears
- Leg wagging
- Depression
- Feeling faint
- Inability to talk
- Nervous cough
- Chain smoking
- Excessive giggling
- Overeating or undereating
- Diarrhea, constipation, or nausea
- Stroking your beard or mustache
- Twirling, pulling, or tossing your hair
- Mouth noises (such as tongue-clucking)
- Talking too much or too fast
- Menstrual irregularities
- Fingernail biting
- Feelings of anger, irritability, or resentment
- Desire to “run away”
- Muscle spasms or tightness
- Fatigue or weariness
- Continual boredom
- Sleeping too much or not enough
- Heart palpitations
- Proneness to errors
- Decreased productivity

“You no longer have to keep up with the Joneses... they've died of exhaustion.”