



Stress Busters

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14 TIMELY TIPS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT



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1. **SPEND TIME PLANNING AND ORGANIZING.** Using time wisely to think and plan is time well-spent. In fact, if you fail to take time for planning, you are, in effect, planning to fail. Organize in a way that makes sense to you. If you need color and pictures, use a lot on your calendar or planning book. Some people need to have papers filed away; others get their creative energy from their piles. So forget the “shoulds” and organize YOUR way.
2. **SET GOALS.** Goals provide direction to your life and determine how you spend your time. When asked the secret to amassing such a fortune, one of the famous Hunt brothers from Texas replied: “First you’ve got to decide what you want.” Set goals that are specific, measurable, realistic and achievable. Your optimum goals are those that cause you to “stretch” but not “break” as you strive for achievement.
3. **PRIORITIZE.** Use the “80-20 Rule” originated by Italian economist Vilfredo Pareto that states, “80 percent of the reward comes from 20 percent of the effort.” The trick to prioritizing is to isolate and identify that valuable 20 percent. Once identified, prioritize your time to work on those items with the greatest reward. Prioritize by color, number or letter—whichever method makes the most sense to you. Flagging items with a deadline is another idea to help you stick to your priorities.

4. **USE A “TO DO” LIST.** Some people thrive daily by using a To Do list created the day before or the first thing in the morning. Such people may combine a To Do list with a calendar or schedule, or use a “running” list that is continuously updated. The key is to use the method that works best for **YOU**. Don’t be afraid to try a new system. You just might find one that works even better than your present one!
5. **BE FLEXIBLE.** Allow time for interruptions and distractions. Time management experts such as Alan Lakein suggest planning for just 50 percent or less of one’s time to allow flexibility to handle interruptions or unplanned emergencies. When you expect to be interrupted, schedule routine tasks. Save (or make) larger blocks of time for your priorities. When interrupted, ask Lakein’s crucial question, “What is the most important thing I can be doing with my time right now?” to help you get back on track fast.
6. **CONSIDER YOUR BIOLOGICAL PRIME TIME.** That’s the time of day when you are at your best. Are you a “morning person,” a “night owl,” or a late afternoon “whiz?” Knowing your best production time will help you to use that time of day to tackle your priorities.
7. **DO THE RIGHT THING RIGHT.** Noted management expert Peter Drucker, says, “Doing the right thing is more important than doing things right.” Doing the right thing is effectiveness; doing things right is efficiency. Focus first on effectiveness, then concentrate on efficiency.
8. **ELIMINATE THE URGENT.** Urgent tasks have short-term consequences, while important tasks are those with long-term, goal-related implications. Work towards reducing the urgent things you must do so you’ll have time for your important tasks. Flagging or highlighting items on your To Do list or attaching a deadline to each item, may help keep important items from becoming emergencies.
9. **PRACTICE THE ART OF INTELLIGENT NEGLECT.** Eliminate trivial tasks or those tasks that do not have long-term consequences from your life. Can you delegate or eliminate any of your To Do list? Work on those tasks that you alone can do.
10. **AVOID BEING A PERFECTIONIST.** In the Malaysian culture, only the gods are considered capable of producing anything perfect. Whenever something is made, a flaw is left on purpose so the gods will not be offended. Yes, some things need to be closer to perfect than others; but perfectionism—paying unnecessary attention to detail—can be a form of procrastination.
11. **CONQUER PROCRASTINATION.** One technique to try is the “Swiss cheese” method described by Alan Lakein. When you are avoiding something, break it into smaller tasks and do just one of the smaller tasks or set a timer and work on the big task for just 15 minutes. By doing a little at a time, eventually, you’ll reach a point where you’ll want to finish.
12. **LEARN TO SAY “NO”.** Such a small word—and so hard to say. Focusing on your goals may help. Blocking time for important, but unscheduled priorities such as family and friends, can also help. But first you must be convinced that you and your priorities are important—that is the difficulty in learning how to say “no”. Once convinced of their importance, saying “no” to the unimportant in life gets easier.
13. **REWARD YOURSELF.** Even for small successes, celebrate achievement of goals. Promise yourself a reward for completing each task or job. Then keep your promise to yourself and indulge in your reward. Doing so will help you maintain the necessary balance in life between work and play. As leadership expert Ann McGee-Cooper says, “If we learn to balance excellence in work with excellence in play, fun, and relaxation, our lives become happier, healthier, and a great deal more creative.”
14. **LEARN NOT TO HAVE TO WORK IN A CRISIS, ANTICIPATE SOME COMMON ACTIONS OR ACTIVITIES.** Through proper planning and by working systematically, you can perform tasks quickly, efficiently and in a timely fashion. Try to develop short cuts to cut down on time when performing routine tasks or activities. Developing a contingency plan will also help you to avoid any pitfalls. Be sure to ask “what if?” when making decisions or developing a course of action. Try to think of at least three ways to handle a crisis, and then put those solutions into practice when appropriate. Don’t forget to revise your contingency plan as needed.