

52 Proven Stress Reducers

1. Get up fifteen minutes earlier in the morning. The inevitable morning mishaps will be less stressful.
2. Prepare for the morning the evening before. Put out the clothes you plan to wear, pack up your books and notes, etc.
3. Don't rely on your memory. Write down appointment times, when library books are due, etc. ("The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory." - Old Chinese Proverb)
4. Lying is stressful. If you know doing something is going to lead you to be dishonest, then avoid doing it altogether.
5. Make duplicates of all keys. Carry a duplicate car key in your wallet, apart from your key ring.
6. Practice preventive maintenance. Your car, appliances, home, and relationships will be less likely to break down/fall apart if you address problems as they arise.
7. Be prepared to wait. A paperback book can make waiting in line almost pleasant.
8. Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.
9. Plan ahead. Don't let the gas tank drop below one-quarter full; keep a well-stocked "emergency shelf" of home staples; don't wait until you're down to your last bus token or postage stamp to buy more; etc.
10. Don't put up with things that work improperly. If your alarm clock, wallet, shoelaces, windshield wipers- whatever-are a constant aggravation, get them fixed or get new ones.
11. Allow an extra 15 minutes to get to appointments.
12. Limit the amount of caffeine in your diet.
13. Always establish contingency plans, "just in case." ("If for some reason either of us is delayed, here's what we'll do..." kind of thing. Or, "If we get split up in the shopping center, here's where we'll meet..")
14. Relax your standards. The world will not end if you don't clean your apartment this weekend.
15. For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10, 50, or 100 things that go right. Count them!
16. Ask questions. Taking a few moments to repeat back directions, what someone expects of you, etc., can save hours.
17. Say "no." Saying "no" to extra projects, social activities, and invitations you don't have the time or energy for takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, everyday, needs quiet time to relax and be alone.
18. Want to take a long bath, meditate, sleep, or read without interruption? Allow yourself to temporarily disconnect. Turn off your home phone, cell phone, pager, etc.
19. Turn "needs" into preferences. Our basic physical needs translate into food, water, and keeping warm. Everything else is a preference. Don't get attached to preferences.
20. Simplify, simplify, simplify...
21. Make friends with non-worriers. If you *want* anxiety and worry, associate with chronic worrywarts.
22. Get up and stretch periodically when you sit for extended periods while studying or at work.
23. Buy a set of earplugs. If you need to find quiet at home, pop in some earplugs.
24. Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind yourself to go to bed, or schedule it in your planner.
25. Create order out of chaos. Organize your home and workspace so you always know where things are. And when you're finished using something, return it to its place - you'll be less stressed when you *haven't* lost something.
26. During stressful situations, people tend to breathe in short, shallow breaths. This limits your body's oxygen supply and delivery and can easily increase muscle tension. Check your breathing throughout the day-particularly before, during, and after high-pressure situations. If you find your stomach muscles are knotted and your breathing is shallow, relax all your muscles and take several deep, slow breaths from your abdomen. Note, how when you're relaxed, both your abdomen and chest expand when you breathe.
27. Writing your thoughts and feelings down (in a journal or on paper to be thrown away) can help you clarify things and can give you a renewed perspective.
28. Try the following yoga technique whenever you need to relax. Inhale deeply through your nose to the count of eight. Then, with lips puckered, exhale very slowly through your mouth to the count of 16, or for as long as you can. Concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel tension dissolve. Repeat 10 times.

52 Proven Stress Reducers (Continued)

29. Inoculate yourself against a feared event. Example: before speaking in public, take time to review every part of the experience in your mind. Imagine what you'll wear, what the audience will look like, how you will present, what the questions will be and how you will answer them, etc. Visualize the experience the way you would like it to be. You'll likely find that when you give the actual presentation, you will be familiar with the material, and you will be less anxious.

30. When stress of having to get a task done interrupts actually getting it done, a diversion may be just what you need (a voluntary change in activity and/or environment).

31. Talk it out. Discussing your problems with a trusted friend can help clear your mind of confusion so you can concentrate on problem-solving.

32. One of the easiest ways to avoid unnecessary stress is to select an environment (work, home, leisure) that is in line with your personal needs and desires. If you dislike desk jobs, avoid accepting a job that requires deskwork. If you dislike gossip, avoid socializing with people who love gossip, etc.

33. Learn to live one day at a time.

34. Every day, do something you really love and enjoy.

35. Add an ounce of love to everything you do.

36. Take a hot bath or shower (or a cool one in summertime) to relieve tension.

37. Do something for somebody else - but avoid taking on others' problems.

38. Focus on understanding rather than on being understood; on loving rather than on being loved.

39. Do something that will improve your appearance. Looking better can help you feel better.

40. Schedule a realistic day. Avoid the tendency to schedule back-to-back appointments; allow time between appointments for a breathing spell.

41. Become more flexible. Some things are worth not doing perfectly, and some issues are worth compromising on.

42. Eliminate destructive self-talk: "I can't do this," "I should have," etc. Exchange it for: "My goal is to complete "X" by completing these steps..."

43. Use your weekend as time for a change of pace. If your weekdays are scheduled and predictable, build in time for action and spontaneity into your weekends. If your weekdays are fast-paced and full of people and deadlines, seek peace and solitude during days off. Feel as if you aren't accomplishing anything at work? Tackle a job that you can finish to your satisfaction on a weekend.

44. "Worry about the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves." That's another way of saying: take care of the todays as best you can, and the yesterdays and the tomorrows will take care of themselves.

45. Do one thing at a time. When you are with someone, be with that person and with no one and nothing else. When you are busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project and put aside other things you have to do.

46. Allow yourself time, every day, for privacy, quiet, and introspection.

47. If you are faced with an unpleasant task, do it early in the day to get it over with; you will no longer have anxiety surrounding that task.

48. Learn to delegate responsibility to capable others.

49. Don't forget to take a lunch break. Try to get away from your desk or work area in body and mind, even if it's just for 15 or 20 minutes.

50. Forget about counting to 10. Count to 1,000 before saying anything that could make matters worse.

51. Have a forgiving view of events and people. Accept what you do and do not have control over.

52. Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe that most people are doing the best they can.

BONUS: At the end of the day, write down 5 things for which you are thankful - it might be your English professor, your dog Charlie, or the clouds in the sky. Guarantee you feel less stressed about your day afterward.

SMILE!! ☺

Adapted from: The National Headache Foundation,
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