

# Season of HOPE

Daily stress and feeling overwhelmed is a problem for many people. Stress impacts both our physical and mental health, reduces our ability to think clearly, impacts our relationships and much more. Having many different approaches to reduce and minimize stress gives us options no matter what the situation.

## Here are 10 Easy Ways to Find The Calm You Need

- 1. Plan to get to all your appointments and commitments 15 minutes early:** Sounds simple but if you get caught in traffic or held-up you'll still be on-time. And if you actually manage to get there early - fantastic, you get some real YOU time. Meditate, review your To-Do list, make/return phone-calls or simply relax for a moment and enjoy the view.  
*Far from 'wasting time', when you get somewhere early you get essential 'alone' time to recharge your batteries - or deal with a couple of minor tasks while you wait.*
- 2. Connect with your inner/wisest self:** Two great questions to ask to ask yourself are, "What would \_\_\_\_\_ (insert your name here) do now?" and "If I were an expert in time management (or the area of your stress), what would I recommend to myself right now?"  
*Use this technique to create some distance from the self that's whizzing around or feeling pressured and create your own wise 'observer'.*
- 3. SLOW wayyy down!** Many routine tasks COULD be more enjoyable - if we weren't trying so hard to get them out of the way. For example, when I rush cooking a meal it feels like a chore, but when I allow plenty of time and relax into it, it becomes a pleasure. This could apply to many routine tasks like emptying the dishwasher, walking the dog, even washing the dishes. But only when we stop seeing the activity as something to be completed or hurried through to get to the next thing. Washing the dishes can become quality time with a loved one, taking the trash out can become an opportunity to look at the stars or listen to birdsong!  
*Enjoy where you are...When you slow down, you honor yourself and the present moment. You'll have more fun in your life - and this helps you handle stress more positively and easily.*
- 4. Loosen your grip:** We hold on tight when we don't trust that things will work out. Think of your busy life as a slippery eel, the tighter you try to grip it, the more likely it is to shoot out of your hands. Plus there's a risk that you might kill your eel! There is a peace that comes when we can let go.  
*Controlling is tiring, and trying to stay on top of everything, exhausting. Focus on your absolute priorities, let go of the rest. See what happens.*
- 5. Take the helicopter view:** Imagine you're in a helicopter, flying along and looking down at your life. What do you see from up there that could help you find clarity and calm? Take off and keep zooming out, gradually getting further away - and getting more perspective on your life. What do you notice? You can also discuss this with a friend, meditate on it or write in your journal.  
*Perspective is an incredibly valuable tool. When we step back, we see possibilities, connections and we get to see valuable breathing space around our lives too...*
- 6. Switch off the technology:**  
**At home?** Switch off the computer, TV, radio, cellphone, home phone ringer, maybe even your wifi!  
**In the office?** Switch off social media, music, email, any programs you're not using, your cellphone and desk-phone ringer if you can - anything EXCEPT the one thing you are working on.  
*Removing distractions allows the mind to settle without all the extra added stimuli. You may be surprised at the peace you feel just knowing that nothing CAN disturb you, until you want it to...*

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7. **Have a whine (yes that's whine, not wine!):** Sometimes a good whine or cry allows us to get that negativity and stress out of our system. Keep it brief - 5-10 minutes maximum - and you'll want a listener who can nod and sympathize without trying to fix you (a coach would be ideal!). Let the person you've chosen know you just need to vent and to feel heard without judgement, suggestions, comments or advice. Once you're finished, be sure to say what you're grateful for OR identify a silver lining. This isn't to negate what you've said or pretend the problem isn't there, but to create a 'state-change' from complaining back to daily life again. *Complaining has such a negative reputation - especially in the personal development world, but denying what we feel just means we bottle it up. So, find someone safe to vent to - and consciously let it out. Remember that a problem shared is a problem halved...*
8. **Get Cleaning!** If you're stressed and not being productive, take a time out to do some cleaning.  
**In the office?** Clean your desk, file papers, dust the monitor, sanitize your phone!  
**At home?** Do some housework - whether it's the dishes, cleaning the front of your kitchen cabinets, organizing the garage or dusting your bedroom.  
*Not only are you getting distance from your stress and allowing your mind to settle, but you're doing something useful too!*
9. **Catch it early!** Learn to recognize the valuable signals your body sends you. Do you know what your 'signs of stress' are? For example, one of my top stress signals is that I start swearing. Early warning signal examples could range from grumpiness, jaw or neck tension, sinking feelings, sweating, a dry or tight throat, reaching for the chocolate or snacks, feeling frustrated or helpless to jiggling your legs or drumming your fingers.  
*Get to know your unique stress signs - then you can take a break or use one of these other techniques before your stress escalates.*
10. **Have (or plan to have) a good laugh!** Over and over it has been proven that laughter is good for us. In fact, even anticipating a laugh can kick-off positive changes in our bodies and reduce stress hormones. Watch a funny movie, head out to the comedy club or open-mike night, phone a friend who makes you laugh, or check out your favorite YouTube video.