



## Stress Reduction Tips

Stress always has and always will be a part of our lives. We all have increasingly stressful lives with more and more demands placed upon us. Yes, a little stress can be good; it keeps you sharp, on your toes and drives you forward. However, prolonged and excessive stress is damaging to your health and relationships. It can lead to chronic disease, weight gain, insomnia, relationship issues, depression, and more.

*Here's the secret... The true cause of stress isn't the problem itself...but our reaction to it.*

Below are 5 great tips to handle stress:

- 1. Identify the cause.** Knowing specifically what the issue is, will help you formulate a plan of action. Immediately deal with the issues that you can control/change, for example waking up earlier for work/important tasks, not leaving things until the last minute, and delegating tasks. Acknowledge that there are issues outside of your control and learn to let them go. (Easier said than done I know!)
- 2. Step away.** Taking a few minutes to get away from it all will do you good. Wash your face, breath slowly and deeply, and notice if there is tension in any part of your body and release it. You can also listen to relaxing music, read a book, take a walk or call a friend.
- 3. Know it will pass.** Remind yourself that the stressful event will end sooner or later. This can help you see the positive sides of things. Calm your emotions and think of clear actions you can take to address the problem rather than focusing your energy on feeling stressed.
- 4. Know yourself, be honest and take action.** Ask yourself: What triggers your anxiety? If for example if it is your job, then maybe it's time for you to consider a less stressful job. Trying to reconnect more with family? What is stopping you from making that a priority? Are finances an issue? What are you willing to change in order to alleviate those feelings of stress?
- 5. Have a relaxed response.** Realize that you are choosing how to react to stressful situations. A relaxed response has two steps. First is repetition. The repetition can be a word, a sound, an expression, or a movement. For example, taking a deep breath or saying a mantra. The second step is to ignore other thoughts that come to your mind while you're doing the action (this is hard!), and continue to focus on your mindful activity. Use this technique once or twice a day for around 15 minutes at a time.

When you incorporate this into your everyday life, you become calmer and better able to handle stress. Remember, the trick is to change your attitude and to develop a relaxed approach, because you cannot be stressed and relaxed at the same time.