

LIVING WITH STRESS

20 Tips to reduce the levels of stress in your life

1. Be realistic about yourself. Perfection takes time and is usually unnecessary! Concentrate on doing a few things well.
2. If you are in authority, learn how to delegate. You can't do everything yourself and the people beneath you may feel frustrated. Train, test and trust those for whom you are responsible.
3. Work off stress. Don't lose your temper – do something physical instead. Even a quick walk round the garden or car park will help. The healthy person needs at least three sessions of two hours strong exercise weekly. Choose something that gets the air deep in your lungs.
4. Manage your time better and plan ahead. Make time work for you and develop a system that works for you, not against you. Work out a system with your partner at home and work.
5. Talk regularly with someone you really trust, (not necessarily your nearest and dearest). The least that will happen is that you will have a different perspective on your life.
6. Learn to accept what you cannot change. Some problems cannot be avoided: simply accepting what has happened will lessen stress.
7. Don't feel selfish about making time for yourself. A small area of each day devoted to yourself will become high value time and act as an excellent restorative. You will be nicer to others if you learn to be nicer to yourself.
8. If you become sick, don't try to carry on as if nothing was happening: you will probably just be passing on germs. Don't be a martyr. Rest and be ready to return fully fit.
9. Get enough rest and sleep. Lack of sleep makes you irritable. See your doctor if problems persist. Sleep is often one of the first things to be sacrificed under stress.
10. Develop a hobby or an active pursuit. This changes the focus of your interest and is good therapy. Get a pet, preferably a cat. Talk to it, spoil it. Become less inhibited.
11. Avoid self-medication. Avoid the intake of drugs and addictive substances and habits, including smoking, alcohol or food in excess: these could become a problem in themselves.
12. Believe in yourself and try to think positively about everything. Work out the lifestyle that suits you and your family. Consider how you react to others and they to you.
13. Do something different every day, even if it's only walking a different way to the bus stop or changing your newspaper occasionally. 'Lay yourself open' to new sights, sounds and experiences.
14. Eat well, but only when you are hungry. Proper nutrition is essential and there are a multitude of sources for healthy eating advice. Plenty of fresh fruit and fibre will form the basis of a healthy diet.
15. Do something for others, but do it willingly, not as though it was an obligation. It will reframe your life.
16. Learn to relax. Learn to release the tension that builds up in your body. Don't think you are relaxing by simply slouching in front of the TV. Learn to breathe and relax properly in ways that will be beneficial to you.
17. Take one thing at a time. Don't be a workaholic and don't jeopardise your home and social life in favour of work – nobody will thank you for it. Learn to recognise 'overload' in yourself and others.
18. Don't be afraid to say 'no', but say it with a smile. Consider whether you can take on extra work and commitments, but only do so if it will not cause stress. If you are in danger of over committing, say so assertively, but not aggressively. Don't become a slave to others.
19. Agree with someone. Fighting is tiring: don't turn the office and home into a battleground. Let others have their own way occasionally – they may do the same for you one day! Life and work is not enjoyed under siege: acrimony will take its toll on your health.
20. Don't try to do important things when you are tired. Get to know your own body and the way it works. Recognise the symptoms of fatigue, pressure and stress. You will not work at anything like your best unless you are in control – of you.