

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. Set the breakfast table, make lunches, put out the clothes you plan to wear, etc.
3. Don't rely on your memory. Write down appointments, when to pick up the dry cleaning, when library books are due, etc. ("The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory." – Chinese Proverb)
4. Do nothing which, after being done, leads you to tell a lie.
5. Make duplicates of all keys. Bury a house key in a secret spot in the garden and carry a duplicate car key in your wallet, apart from your key ring.
6. Practice preventative maintenance. Your car, appliances, home, and relationships will be less likely to break down/fall apart "at the worst possible moment."



7. Eliminate (or restrict) the amount of caffeine in your diet.



8. Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do it today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.

9. Plan ahead. Don't let the gas tank get 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 something that doesn't work right. If your alarm clock, wallet, shoelaces, windshield wipers – whatever – are a constant aggravation, get them fixed or get new ones.

11. Allow 15 minutes of extra time to get to appointments. Plan to arrive at the airport two hours before domestic departures.

12. Be prepared to wait. A paperback can make a wait in a post office line almost pleasant.



13. Always set up contingency plans, for "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 the grass doesn't get mowed this weekend or if the sheets have to be changed a day later than planned.

15. Pollyanna-Power! For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10, 50, or 100 blessings. Count 'em!

16. Ask questions. Taking a few moments to repeat back what is expected of you can save hours. (The old "the hurrier I go, the behinder I get" idea.)

17. Say "NO!" Saying no to extra projects, social activities and invitations you know 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. Unplug your phone. Want to take a long bath or meditate without interruption? Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect the phone. (The possibility of there being a terrible emergency in the next hour or so is almost nil.)

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. Nothing can get you into a habit of worrying faster than associating with chronic worrywarts.

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

23. Wear earplugs. If you need to find quiet at home, but junior must practice the piano, pop in some earplugs (available in any drugstore) and smile.



24. Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.

25. Create order out of chaos. Organize your home and workspace so that you always know exactly where things are. Put things away where they belong and you won't have to go through the stress of losing them.

26. When feeling stressed, most people tend to take in short, shallow breaths. When you breathe like this, stale air is not expelled, oxidation of the tissue is incomplete, and muscle tension frequently results. Check your breathing throughout the day, especially before, during, and after high-pressure situations. If you think your stomach muscles are knotted and your breathing is shallow, relax all your muscles and take several deep, slow breaths. 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 a piece of paper to be thrown away) can help you clarify things and can give you a new 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 sixteen, or for as long as you can. Concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel the tension dissolve. Repeat ten times.

29. Inoculate yourself against a feared event. Just as vaccine containing a virus can protect against illness, if you expose yourself to one or more of the dreaded aspects of an experience beforehand, you often can ease your fears. Example: before speaking in public, take time to go over every part of the experience in your mind. Imagine what you'll wear, what the audience will look like, how you will present your talk, what the questions will be, how you will answer them, etc. Visualize the experience the way you would have it be. You'll find that when it comes time to make the actual presentation, it will be "old hat" and much of your anxiety will have disappeared.

30. When the stress of having to get a job done gets in the way of getting the job done, diversion – a voluntary change in activity and/or environment – may be just what you need.

31. Get up and stretch periodically if your job requires that you sit for extended periods.



32. One of the most obvious ways to avoid unnecessary stress is to select an environment (work, home, and leisure) that is in line with your personal needs and desires. If you hate desk jobs, don't accept a job that requires you to sit at a desk all day. If you hate to talk politics, don't associate with people who love to talk politics, etc.

33. Learn to live one day at a time.

34. Everyday, do something that you really enjoy.



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

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



37. Do something for somebody else.

38. Focus on understanding, rather on being understood. On loving, instead of being loved.

39. Do something to 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 better to compromise on.

42. Eliminate destructive self-talk: "I'm too old to...", "I'm too fat to..."



43. Use your weekend time for a change of pace. If your workweek is slow and patterned, make sure there is action and time for spontaneity built into your weekends. If your workweek is fast-paced and full of people and deadlines, seek peace and solitude during your days off. Feel as if you aren't accomplishing anything tangible at work? Tackle a job on the weekend that you can finish to your satisfaction.

44. "Worry about the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves." In other words: 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 no one else. When you are busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project and forget about everything else that you have to do.



46. Allow yourself time – everyday – for privacy, quiet, and introspection.

47. If a particularly task faces you, do it early in the day and get it over with. Then the rest of the day will be free of anxiety.

48. Learn to delegate responsibility to others that are capable.

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 fifteen or twenty minutes.



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

51. Have a forgiving view of events and people. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world.

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



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