10 Tips For Reducing Stress

Stress can cause problems at home and work. To combat this, there are some simple, common sense tips that you can follow that should help you reduce stress in your life and increase your happiness at home and in the office.

1. Avoid Caffeine, Alcohol, and Sugar. It's easier said than done, but when we're stressed, we tend to reach for the very things that might be adding to our problems. Caffeine is a stimulant and tends to increase your stress levels, rather than reduce them. Alcohol is a depressant, especially when used in large quantities, which isn't helpful either when trying to reduce stress. Try to reduce your consumption of alcohol and anything containing caffeine. Drink more water, herbal teas, or fruit juices that are low in sugar. Keeping your body hydrated will help you better cope with stress. Additionally, aim to reduce your intake of refined sugars (most manufactured foods contain them) as they likely will cause energy crashes.

2. Exercise Regularly. One of the best ways to reduce stress is to exercise. Even if it's just a brisk walk, try to stay active during the day. Work to make a routine of it, whether it's before or after work, or during a lunch break. Try taking a yoga class or other regular exercise class – and remember to set reasonable goals for yourself. Aerobic exercise can release endorphins that will help you feel better and give you a positive attitude.

3. Learn to Relax. There are many tactics to try when looking for an outlet for stress. Go out for a stroll, close your eyes at your desk for ten minutes, or simply take a break during the day to clear your mind. Test different methods over time to find one that's tailored to your triggers and needs.

4. Create a Stress Journal. It might seem silly at first, but creating a stress journal can really help you identify your individual triggers. When you feel stress coming on, make a note of it. Write down the date, time and the place. Make sure to note what you were doing and how you felt. You can even give it a rating (low, moderate or high). Once you're aware of your triggers, you can take steps to limit or avoid the things that cause you stress.

5. Try Talking to Someone. Sometimes just talking to someone about how you feel can improve your outlook. Stress tends to make you lose focus of what's really important, and talking to a friend, colleague or family member can help you see things clearly. Lean on them for support when you need to -- it can make a big difference.

6. Try to Get More Sleep. One of the biggest causes of stress is a lack of sleep. But stress can also interrupt sleep,

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as we replay the events of the day in our minds. Instead of relying on medication, learn to relax before going to sleep. Create a tranquil setting and eliminate anything that might remind you of things that upset you. Stay away from caffeine, stop doing anything that requires heavy mental thought (including work), and let your mind rest. Try reading a calming book or taking a warm bath or shower to relax. You could also research affirming or stress relieving podcasts or guided meditation videos. Try to stop thinking about events of the day and incorporate a set time each day that you go to sleep so that your body has a predictable routine.

7. Learn to Take Control. It's easy to become overwhelmed by all the things you need to do during the day. You must learn that you can't do everything all at once- you have to prioritize. Make a list of the things you need to do and rank them by importance. Note the ones that must be done immediately. You might be able to break them down into smaller tasks that can be done over time. Consider looking into habit journals or task managing software programs. This can help reduce your feelings of being overwhelmed.

8. Learn to Say No. One of the best ways to reduce stress is to say "no" to projects and commitments that will overwhelm you. Having too much to do can cause stress, and adding additional requests from others can only make matters worse. Many people agree to take additional responsibilities because they find it difficult to say "no." Prepare some phrases to make it easier. Stand up for yourself.

9. Leave Your Work at Work. When you leave work, leave work. Try to do things outside of work that are fun, productive and stress-free. Do things that will engage you physically and mentally, but stay away from things that remind you of work. Remember that keeping a balance between your work and home life is essential to reducing excessive stress.

10. Take ALL Your Earned Vacation Time. You've earned it – now enjoy it! It doesn't really matter where you go or what you do, but you must take your vacation time. Visit family or friends, relax at home, start a new hobby, clean out your garage or read a book. The important thing is that you relax and enjoy your time away from work.