

STRESS Relievers: Tips to Tame Stress

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Stress getting to you? Try some of these tips for stress relief.

Is stress making you frustrated and irritable? Stress relievers can help restore calm and serenity to your chaotic life. You don't have to invest a lot of time or thought into stress relievers. If your stress is getting out of control and you need quick relief, try one of these tips.

Get active

Virtually any form of physical activity can act as a stress reliever. Even if you're not an athlete or you're out of shape, exercise is still a good stress reliever.

Physical activity pumps up your feel-good endorphins and other natural neural chemicals that enhance your sense of well-being. Exercise also refocuses your mind on your body's movements, improving your mood and helping the day's irritations fade away. Consider walking, jogging, gardening, housecleaning, biking, swimming, weightlifting or anything else that gets you active.

Laugh more

A good sense of humor can't cure all ailments, but it can help you feel better, even if you have to force a fake laugh through your grumpiness. When you laugh, it not only lightens your mental load but also causes positive physical changes in your body. Laughter fires up and then cools down your stress response. So read some jokes, tell some jokes, watch a comedy or hang out with your funny friends.

Connect with others

When you're stressed and irritable, your instinct may be to wrap yourself in a cocoon. Instead, reach out to family and friends and make social connections.

Social contact is a good stress reliever because it offers distraction, provides support and helps you tolerate life's up and downs. So take a coffee break with a friend, email a relative or visit your place of worship. Got more time? Considering volunteering for a charitable group and help yourself while helping others.

Assert yourself

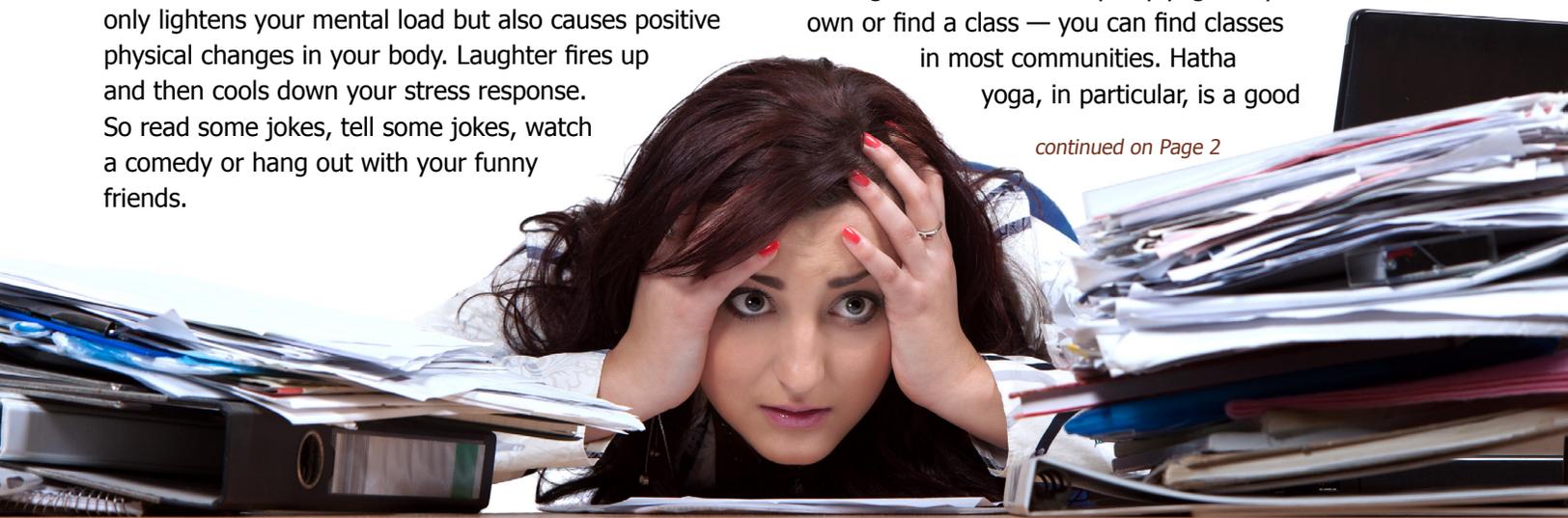
You might want to do it all but you can't, at least not without paying a price. Learning to say no or being willing to delegate can help you manage your to-do list and your stress.

Saying yes may seem like an easy way to keep the peace, prevent conflicts and get the job done right. But it may actually cause you internal conflict because your needs and those of your family come second, which can lead to stress, anger, resentment and even the desire to exact revenge. And that's not a very calm and peaceful reaction.

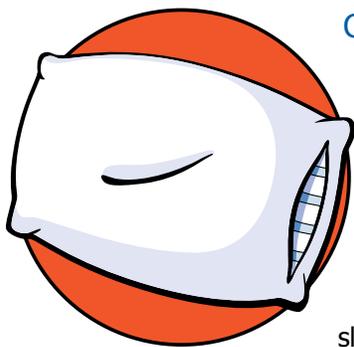
Try yoga

With its series of postures and controlled-breathing exercises, yoga is a popular stress reliever. Yoga brings together physical and mental disciplines to achieve peacefulness of body and mind, helping you relax and manage stress and anxiety. Try yoga on your own or find a class — you can find classes in most communities. Hatha yoga, in particular, is a good

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stress reliever because of its slower pace and easier movements.



Get enough sleep

Stress often gives sleep the heave-ho. When you have too much to do — and too much to think about — your sleep suffers. But sleep is the time when your brain and body recharge.

The quality and amount of sleep you get affects your mood, energy level, concentration and overall functioning. If you have sleep troubles, make sure that you have a quiet, relaxing bedtime routine; listen to soothing music; put cell phones, tablets and clocks away; and stick to a consistent schedule.

Keep a journal

Writing down your thoughts and feelings can be a good release for otherwise pent-up emotions. Don't think about what to write — just let it happen. Write whatever comes to mind. No one else needs to read it, so don't strive for perfection in grammar or spelling. Just let your thoughts flow on paper — or computer screen. Once you're done, you can toss out what you wrote or save it to reflect on later.

Get musical and be creative

Listening to or playing music is a good stress reliever because it provides a mental distraction, reduces muscle tension and decreases stress hormones. Crank up the volume and let your mind be absorbed by the music.

If music isn't your thing, turn your attention to another hobby you enjoy, such as gardening, sewing, sketching — anything that requires you to focus on what you're doing rather than what you think you should be doing.

Seek counseling

If new stressors are challenging your ability to cope or if self-care measures just aren't relieving your stress, you may need to look for reinforcements in the form of therapy or counseling. Therapy also may be a good idea if you feel overwhelmed or trapped, if you worry excessively, or if you have trouble carrying out daily routines or meeting responsibilities at work, home or school. Professional counselors or therapists can help you identify sources of your stress and learn new coping tools.

Adjusting to a Changing Workplace

Weathering day-to-day changes in the workplace can be stressful enough. But when a workplace goes through a dramatic change such as a reorganization, restructure or merger, other strategies may be necessary to cope. The list below covers 10 simple and effective strategies for dealing with and overcoming the stress of a changing workplace.



Understand Where You Stand

When dealing with workplace change, it is more important that you understand your responses to stressful situations. Understanding the phases of accepting change can increase self-awareness and help you move smoothly through workplace transition.

- **Reluctance** — When a situation moves people out of their comfort zone, they sometimes resist the change through denial, non-compliance, open or even subversive activities. Thoughts or statements like "This is not for me" or "Well, I'm not doing that" are telltale signs of this phase.
- **Uncertainty** — During this phase, workers often feel most vulnerable, both career-wise and personally. They may perceive threats to their jobs and have their sense of security shaken.
- **Assimilation** — At this phase, the change begins to be absorbed into the old structure. Though many still prefer the old way, the first intrepid few are experimenting with and adjusting to the new structure in order to succeed.

- **Transferral** — During transferral, employees begin to replace aspects of the pre-change environment with the new. Confidence is raised to levels comparable to before the change, and some become advocates for the new order.
- **Integration** — Integration is the final step in adapting to change. At this point, the workplace has successfully accepted the change into its routine and most are comfortable with it.

Be Prepared for Growing Pains

Changes in the workplace oftentimes push people into new roles and departments. This leads to higher stress levels as workers attempt to adjust to the new setting and their new duties. This is all part of a company's development and these reactions are to be expected. It is important to realize this awkwardness and uncertainty will pass, and ultimately these changes could lead to new and greater chances for growth and advancement.

Keep Your Sense of Humor

Often with the changes in the workplace, not only do you find new faces and new responsibility, but increased tension. Retaining a good sense of humor can alleviate this stress. Humor relieves personal stress, keeps morale up and breaks the ice with new co-workers.



Keep a Good Attitude

While you may not be able to affect the changes that are taking place, you are the master of your attitude. Your enthusiasm for work, even if you are not enthusiastic about the changes taking place, can serve to ease stress for both yourself and your co-workers. As the old adage goes: when the wind begins to blow, it is better to bend

as the willow than be stiff as the oak. The same is true for the changing workplace. Your flexibility can make the difference between the change being a positive experience and one that could compromise your career.

Use the Change as a Chance to Grow

While changes, especially sudden or drastic ones, can be very intimidating, they also provide a unique opportunity to grow. Perhaps you have been moved from your previous position, or are in a new department or under a different manager. Since you have to start fresh, you may have the opportunity to escape the aspects of your previous position or department you didn't like. Capitalize on this chance to rebuild your image.

Question Your Fears

It is perfectly natural to be a little scared during a big shake-up at work, and a good way to conquer fear is to examine why it is there. Ask yourself these questions:

- "What do I have to lose from this change? What can I gain?"
- "How will this change the way I work? For the better? For the worse?"
- "What past experiences might I have had that are making me nervous now?"

Find the Positive

Try looking at the changes occurring around you not as detrimental, but as opportunities for advancement. Some good approaches:

- **Challenge** — The change will increase your experience and provide a good learning opportunity.
- **Rewards** — While you may have been shuffled, you are gaining more skills.
- **Personal Satisfaction** — The adversity presented to you is a chance for you to grow as a person in addition to learning new skills and trying new talents.

Remain Balanced

We all deal with stress differently. Some of us thrust ourselves into the new situations. Others shy away. Regardless of how you handle stress, it is important to remain balanced. Burying yourself in work or shying away from responsibility can be equally damaging to you during this period. In a stressful environment such as a transitioning workplace, stress management can be the key to success or failure.

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The Basics: Depression Facts

Major depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the United States.¹ Depression can affect adults, children, teens and the elderly. It affects men and women. The good news is that depression can be treated and you can improve your life.

What causes depression?

Nobody knows exactly what causes depression. Sometimes the disorder can run in a family. Other times, a situation in life can cause us to feel down and depressed like the loss of a loved one, a stressful situation or difficulties at work or at home. Sometimes depression can occur with no reason at all. You may be living with depression when certain feelings like sadness, irritability, sleeping too much or too little, or eating too much or too little, won't go away. A person cannot just stop being depressed because he or she wants. To those with depression recovery may seem impossible, but it is not. The important thing to focus on is that one can live with and recover from depression.

Depression Signs and Symptoms:

- You feel helpless or hopeless and that you cannot do anything to feel differently;
- You feel hopeless and like your life will always be this way;
- You have trouble sleeping;
- You want to sleep all the time or you can't get to sleep or stay asleep;
- You have trouble with things that used to be easy;
- Making decisions seems hard;
- You feel worthless;
- You are never hungry;
- You can't stop eating;
- You have ongoing aches, pains, cramps or digestive problems;
- You are constantly irritated;
- You get mad really easily;
- You have thoughts of suicide;
- You do not enjoy the things you once did;
- You have trouble focusing or showing up to work;
- You feel very slow and lazy;
- You feel very anxious;
- You feel sad for a long time;
- You cry for no reason;

- You feel like nothing matters; and
- You feel isolated from the world.

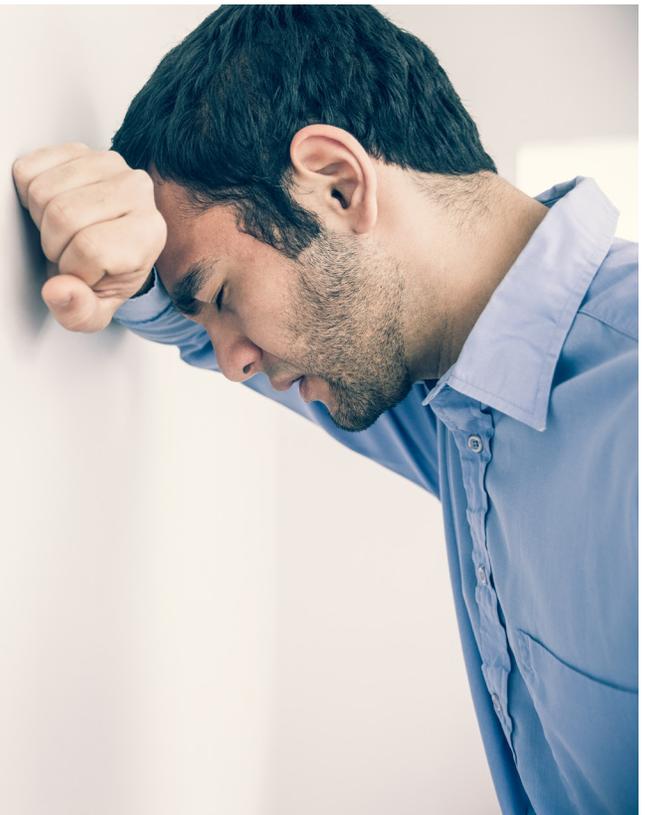
When these feelings last for a very long time and you have extreme feelings of sadness, you might be living with depression.

For someone living with untreated depression, the tasks of everyday life can feel like they are too much to handle. You may no longer have fun doing things you used to enjoy. For a person with depression, day-to-day things like getting out of bed or taking a shower can feel too big to overcome. The symptoms may create a sense of shame and guilt.

Depression is a medical illness and can be treated

Not only is depression emotional, it can be physical as well. The body can have aches, pains and feel sluggish. All parts of your life are affected. Relationships, work, education and financial matters all suffer. The combination of symptoms and consequences often leads to thoughts of suicide. It may seem that life can never be any different. Without any hope for the future, it may feel as if there is no reason to live. But life can be different. There is a chance for a better future.

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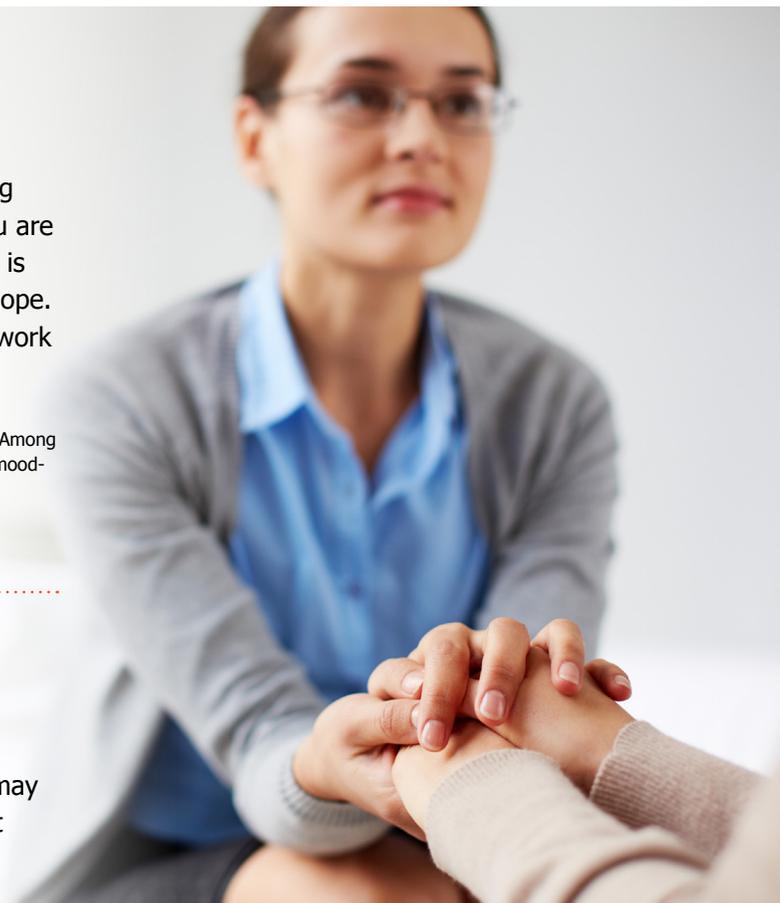
How depression is treated

Depression is a medical illness. Like any other illness you need to get treatment. There are things that can be learned to help you manage the symptoms. Having depression does not make a person lazy or weak. You are not at fault but you can be in control. Asking for help is the first step. Life can and does get better. There is hope. With the help of a health care professional and a network of support, life can become good again.

Sources:

1 The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) (2014). Major Depression Among Adults. Retrieved from www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-mood-disorder-among-adults.shtm.

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It's Nothing Personal

One of the most common workplace changes is the shuffling of positions and duties. Unfortunately, you may be the one who has been moved. It is very important to remember the decision is not a personal attack or comment on your abilities, but purely a business decision on the company's part.

Do Your Job — Well

No matter what changes are happening in your place of work, there is one piece of advice you need to follow. In a crisis period, a lot can be determined about the loyalty and dedication of an employee. You can lend stability to the workplace by showing your co-workers that life and work go on. The fortitude to continue working to the best of your ability will no doubt leave a lasting impression, whether you have worked for someone for two days or two decades.

It is easy to be overwhelmed by workplace change. Sudden random changes, the loss of co-workers and the influx of new faces can be a lot to handle at once. If you begin to face the new environment with awareness, however, you can help smooth the transition for everyone and look forward to a whole workplace again.



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OHIO EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Your employee assistance program offers confidential help for personal problems and concerns. Concerned about a troubled family member who won't get help? Feel tired and exhausted, but don't know if it's burnout, loss of motivation, depression or all three? Late for work too often? Has the use of alcohol or drugs created a crisis you are facing right now? The bottom line, never wonder if your concern is appropriate to contact OEAP. So, if you've been putting off taking action to solve a serious issue that is weighing on you, give OEAP a call today.

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