

Nine Stress Prevention Tactics

Shift your perspective on life to help prevent stress

Many of the situations that can cause stress are often beyond our personal control — a late train, a flat tire, a sudden rain shower — just to name a few. The stress we experience, however, can be controlled — to a certain extent — because it is our reaction to a given event that either prompts our stress response or not.

Change your perspective

Sometimes, it is a simple shift in perspective that can allow stress to dissolve. If your train is late, you can either fume about it or use it as an opportunity to catch up on your correspondence. You could also take it as a chance to relax and do some deep breathing exercises — happy that you were suddenly able to relax and recharge.

Check your approach

If you find that you cannot effectively influence the situation, then you will need to change your approach. Being willing to be change your usual way of responding can make a potentially stressful circumstance much more bearable. Remember, you have the ability to choose your response to stressors, and you may have to try various options.

Some helpful ideas include:

- Take a moment to recognize and acknowledge when you do not have control, and trying to be flexible and graciously let go
- Anticipate anxiety-provoking situations and planning different ways to respond
- Take control of your own reactions and focus your mind on something that makes you feel calm and in control. This may take some practice, but it can pay off with peace of mind

Give yourself breathing space

Frequently, stress is a byproduct of feeling like you are in a hurry. Give yourself extra time to get to an appointment, park the car, and check in at the front desk. Having additional time can help you feel calm and collected. In fact, consider making a habit of waking up earlier to give yourself a more leisurely pace for getting to work each day.

Take care of your needs

Often, what we experience as psychological and emotional stress has its origins in physical stress. Perhaps, you are overly tired, hungry, or thirsty when a situation that would not normally trigger your stress response causes a mini meltdown. Taking care of your needs is sometimes as simple as drinking a glass of water, having a small snack, or taking a five-minute break away from your computer.

Give yourself a break

At times, stress is more pointedly self-created. Practice taking a lighter approach with yourself, when you can. Everyone makes mistakes every once in a while, so next time

you lose your keys, be kinder to yourself — and avoid the usual spiral of stress and self-incrimination. You can later extend this approach to your dealings with others — accepting their occasional lapses, too.

Do one thing at a time

While doing more than one thing at a time (multitasking) may feel efficient, it can be more than a bit stress-inducing. Discover the pleasure of doing one task at a time. You may find that you are feeling calmer and more balanced afterward — and the final outcome is better executed.

Build up your reserves

Sometimes just feeling more balance and centered can help prevent a stressful reaction. Having more resiliency can help you deal with stress in healthy ways. Resilience can be learned and strengthened with different strategies, such as:

- Maintain a positive view of yourself
- Accept change with grace and ease
- Keep things in perspective (e.g., is this critically important?)
- Develop a strong social support network of friends, loved ones, and community

Make time to calm the mind

Relaxation methods — such as meditation — are useful ways to bring your emotions into balance and keep stress at bay. Meditation can take many forms. For example, you may come to a meditative state quietly sitting on your own, with a spiritual group, or while exercising, stretching, or breathing deeply.

Flex your new muscles

It is only natural that you may experience a few bumps in the road as you start your new stress prevention efforts. Be open to the occasional lapse and return to strengthening your stress-prevention muscles by breathing deeply and letting go.

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) can offer strategies and support to help you prevent stress and improve your outlook on life.