

Eleven Tips for Dealing With Stress

1. Put your body in motion.

Moving from the chair to the couch while watching TV is not being physically active! Physical activity is one of the most important ways to keep stress away by clearing your head and lifting your spirits. Physical activity also increases endorphin levels—the natural "feel-good" chemicals in the body that leave you with a naturally happy feeling.

Whether you like full-fledged games of football, tennis, or roller hockey, or you prefer walks with family and friends, it's important to get up, get out, and get moving!

2. Fuel up first.

If your body was a car, you wouldn't go for a long drive without filling up the gas tank first. Likewise, begin each day by eating breakfast to give you the energy you need to tackle the day. Eating regular meals (this means no skipping dinner) and taking time to enjoy them (nope, eating in the car doesn't count) will make you feel better too.

Make sure to fuel up with fruits, vegetables, proteins (peanut butter, a chicken sandwich, or a tuna salad) and grains (wheat bread, pasta, or some crackers)—these will give you the power you need to make it through those hectic days.

Don't be fooled by the jolt of energy you get from sodas and sugary snacks—this only lasts a short time, and once it wears off, you may feel sluggish and more tired than usual. For that extra boost of energy to sail through history notes, math class, and extracurricular activities, grab a banana, some string cheese, or a granola bar for some power-packed energy!

3. LOL (Laugh out loud)!

Some say that laughter is the best medicine—well, in many cases, it is! Did you know that it takes 15 facial muscles to laugh? Lots of laughing can make you feel good—and, that good feeling can stay with you even after the laughter stops. So, head off stress with regular doses of laughter by watching a funny movie, visiting joke websites, or even making up your own riddles—laughter can make you feel like a new person!

Everyone has those days when they do something really silly or stupid—instead of getting upset with yourself, laugh out loud! No one's perfect! Life should be about having fun; so lighten up!

4. Have fun with friends.

Being with people you like is always a good way to ditch your stress. Get a group together to go to the movies, shoot some hoops, listen to music, play a board game, or just hang out and talk. Friends can help you work through your problems and let you see the brighter side of things.

5. Spill to someone you trust.

Instead of keeping your feelings bottled up inside, talk to someone you trust or respect about what's bothering you. It could be a friend, a parent, a friend's parent, someone in your family or from your religious community, or a professor. Talking out your problems and seeing them from a different view might help you figure out ways to deal with them. Just remember, you don't have to go at it alone!

6. Take time to chill.

Pick a comfy spot to sit and read, daydream, or even take a snooze. Listen to your favorite music. Work on a relaxing project like putting together a puzzle or making jewelry.

Stress can sometimes make you feel like a tight rubber band—stretched to the limit! If this happens, take a few deep breaths to help yourself unwind. If you're in the middle of an impossible class assignment, take a break! Finding time to relax after (and sometimes during) a hectic day or week can make all the difference.

7. Catch some zzz's.

Fatigue is a best friend to stress. When you don't get enough sleep, it's hard to deal—you may feel tired, cranky, or you may have trouble thinking clearly. When you're overtired, a problem may seem much bigger than it actually is. You may

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have a hard time doing an assignment that usually seems easy, you don't do your best in sports or any physical activity, or you may have an argument with your friends over something really stupid.

Sleep is a big deal! Getting the right amount of sleep is especially important for people your age. Most young people need between 8.5 and just over 9 hours of sleep each night. Because your body (and mind) is changing and developing, it requires more sleep to recharge for the next day. So don't resist, get those zzz's!

8. Keep a journal.

If you're having one of those crazy days when nothing goes right, it's a good idea to write things down in a journal to get it off your chest—like how you feel, what's going on in your life, and things you'd like to accomplish. You could even write down what you do when you're faced with a stressful situation, and then look back and think about how you handled it later. So, find a quiet spot, grab a notebook and pen, and start writing!

9. Get it together.

Do you have too much to do and not enough time? Did you forget about an assignment? Are you feeling overwhelmed or forgetful? Being unprepared for school, practice, or other activities can make for a very stressful day!

Getting everything done can be a challenge, but all you have to do is plan a little and get organized.

10. Lend a hand.

Get involved in an activity that helps others. It's almost impossible to feel stressed out when you're helping someone else. It's also a great way to find out about yourself and the special talents you never knew you had! Signing up for a service project is a good idea, but helping others is as easy as saying hello, holding a door, or volunteering to keep a neighbor's pet. If you want to get involved in a more organized volunteer program, try working at a local recreation center, or helping with an after school program. The feeling you will get from helping others is greater than you can imagine!

11. Learn ways to better deal with anger.

It is totally normal to be angry sometimes—everyone gets mad at some point. As a young adult, the changing hormones in your body can cause you to feel mad for what seems like no good reason sometimes. The important thing is to deal with your anger in a healthy way. It will help to cool down first and then focus on positive solutions to problems. This will help you to communicate better with the people in your life and you can even earn more respect along the way. So, the next time something really has you stressed out, try these steps:

- Try to calm yourself down before doing or saying anything.
- Tell the other person what the problem is and how it makes you feel.
- Try to think of some solutions. What would the good and bad results of those solutions be?
- Explain your solution to the person you are upset with and try to put it into action together.
- Explain your solution to the other person and, together, try to put it into action.

GirlsHealth, National Women's Health Information Center. (Updated 2007, April). *Mind emotion commotion: 11 tips for dealing with stress*. Retrieved September 19, 2007, from www.girlshealth.gov