

TIPS FOR REDUCING STRESS

1. **Learn to plan.** Disorganization can breed stress. Having too many projects going simultaneously often leads to confusion, forgetfulness, and the sense that uncompleted projects are hanging over your head. When possible, take on projects one at a time and work on them until completed. See handout, “How to plan your time”, or take a time management workshop.
2. **Prioritize and ask for help.** Prioritizing helps us focus on what is really important. If you are still overwhelmed, ask others for help – delegate.
3. **Recognize and accept limits.** Many of us set unreasonable and unattainable goals for ourselves. We can never be perfect, so we often have a sense of failure or inadequacy no matter how well we perform. Set achievable goals for yourself.
4. **Say “no”.** Remove yourself from the stressful situation by saying “no” to begin with, delegate, recognize & honor your healthy boundaries, and, if necessary, back out of an obligation (learn from this experience). Some creative ways to say “no” are: “Let me think about that”, “I have a lot on my plate”, “Let me check my schedule and get back with you”. It’s easier to reply later more assertively.
5. **Learn to play.** You need occasionally to escape from the pressure of life and have fun. Find pastimes which are absorbing and enjoyable to you no matter what your level of ability is.
6. **Be a positive person.** Avoid criticizing others. Learn to praise the things you like in others. Focus on the good qualities those around you possess. Be sure to give yourself credit and appreciate your own good qualities, as well.
7. **Learn to tolerate and forgive.** Intolerance of others leads to frustration and anger. An attempt to really understand the way other people feel can make you more accepting of them. Accept and forgive yourself also.
8. **Avoid unnecessary competition.** There are many competitive situations in life we can’t avoid. Too much concern with winning in too many areas of life can create excessive tension and anxiety, and make us unnecessarily aggressive.
9. **Get regular physical exercise.** Check with your physician before beginning any exercise program. You will be more likely to stay with an exercise program if you choose one that you really enjoy rather than one that feels like pure hard work and drudgery.
10. **Learn a systematic, drug-free method of relaxing.** Meditation, yoga, or any of a variety of relaxation techniques can be learned from various accredited teachers and licensed psychotherapists.
11. **Talk out your troubles.** Find a friend, member of the clergy, faculty member, counselor, or psychotherapist you can be open with. Expressing your “bottled up” tension to a sympathetic ear can be incredibly helpful.
12. **Change your thinking.** How we feel emotionally often depends on our outlook or philosophy of life. Changing one’s belief is a difficult and painstaking process. There is little practical wisdom in the modern world to guide us through our lives. No one has all the answers, but some answers are available.
13. **Building and maintaining support systems.** Friends, family, tutors, professors, librarians, counselors, and workshops are great resources. Stay connected and know where to go for help.
14. **Change expectations of yourself and the situation.** Remember you cannot please everyone. Decide what makes you happy and find a balance. Give up perfectionism. Sometimes it’s okay to be “good” not “excellent”. Recognize your own need to control. It’s okay if things are not done your way.