

Minimizing Stress Maximizing Life



30 Stress Relieving Tips for 30 Days

Stress is our body's natural response to having more demands placed on us than we have resources to handle. To reduce stress, we need to either decrease demands (practice saying, "no") or increase resources (think exercise, journaling, talking to a friend). Use the following tips to help minimize the stress in your own life.

1. **Breathe.** Inhale 1-2-3-4, Exhale 1-2-3-4, repeat.
2. **Rest.** It is much harder to deal with stress when tired.
3. **Avoid magnifying mirrors.** I haven't seen one yet that reduces stress.
4. **Focus on things you can control,** not the things you can't.
5. **Set realistic expectations.** Stress is often caused by unrealistic expectations we place on ourselves and others.
6. **Be flexible.** My favorite quote is, "Blessed are the flexible for they shall never be bent out of shape."
7. **Prioritize.** It is easy to get so caught up in the little things in life that we forget to spend time on the things (and people) that are important.
8. **Smile:** Smile and your body thinks you are happy. You can fake it 'til you make it! Facial feedback works because the brain senses the flexion of certain facial muscles and interprets it as, "Oh, I must be happy about something." Similarly, if that muscle isn't flexed then your brain thinks, "Oh, I must not be happy."
9. **Relax:** Give it a break! Both the body and the brain need down time.
10. **Set limits/boundaries:** Letting people know your needs and limits can be challenging, yet doing so can result in more satisfying relationships.
11. **Practice positive self-talk.** Situations are not stressful in and of themselves. Our minds create stress, which means our minds can also decrease stress. Tell yourself, "I choose not to be stressed about this situation". (You may need to repeat this several times!)
12. **Engage in creative endeavors.** Clearing the mind and focusing intently on something like painting, writing and music can reduce stress. That's what I've been doing for myself and it helps!
13. **Chunk down large tasks into smaller pieces.** One of my favorite quotes is, "How do you eat an elephant? One bite at a time." Same applies for big jobs; remember one small bite at a time.
14. **Know your personal stressors.** Identifying your stress triggers can help you better prepare to cope with future stressful situations and events.
15. **Distract yourself.** Stress is sometimes unavoidable, but finding a pleasurable activity to occupy your thoughts can help you not focus on it.
16. **Laugh...** enough said!

17. **View troubles as temporary**, not permanent, setbacks. Avoiding words like “always” and “never” can help. Example: “I am always tired,” versus “I am tired today.” “I’ll never get a job,” versus “I don’t have a job yet.”
18. **Get a massage**. Massage is a proven antidote to stress, plus it feels fabulous!
19. **Exercise**. It is amazing to me how relaxing a walk can be.
20. **Meditate**. Not always an easy habit to start (trust me on this!), but the calm mind that follows is definitely worth it.
21. **Talk to a friend**. Social support can be a key factor in reducing stress. I know I feel better when someone listens to what is causing me stress.
22. **Get organized**. We all know how stressful it is to lose something, or not be able to find things when we need them.
23. **Create a “to do” list** that not only includes things you have to do but, more importantly, also includes things you want to do.
24. **Write it out**. Writing is a great way to vent and release tension. It can also help you work through problems and see them differently.
25. **Close your eyes and imagine** the most relaxing place you have ever been. Relax there for a few minutes. (I do this when I get MRIs and other medical tests.)
26. **Curl your toes** under tightly and hold for 15 seconds. Now tighten your calf muscles and hold for 15 seconds. Move up your body, progressively tensing and relaxing the legs, stomach, back, shoulders, neck and face.
27. **When you are feeling stressed** and frustrated ask yourself whether the whole situation will matter in 10 years. If not, smile and let it go.
28. **Snuggle with a pet**. There is a reason that dogs are now visiting children in the hospital, the elderly and even being used to calm children in court.
29. **Let go of perfectionism**. Living in the world of “good enough” can be a huge stress reducer.
30. **Have fun!**

About Cindy Coney

Ambassador of hope and author of *The Wild Woman’s Guide to Living with Chronic Illness*, Cindy Coney is a nationally acclaimed speaker, trainer, patient advisor and a philanthropic force to be reckoned with. Dedicated to helping both children and adults achieve optimal health and success, Cindy has taught thousands of people to move beyond coping with limitations to recapturing joy and fulfillment in their lives. www.cindyconey.com.