Ten Tips for Stress Management

TEN TIPS FOR STRESS MANAGEMENT

LIVE WELL UTAH

It’s the most wonderful time of the year, but it can also be a stressful time. Try some of these strategies to manage your stress, no matter the time of year.

Despite our best efforts to reduce the stress in our lives, it is unrealistic to think we will completely eliminate it. Therefore, it is critical for our health and well-being to find ways to manage the stress that infiltrates our lives.

In order to effectively manage stress, it is important to first know where it is coming from. Take time to pinpoint the areas of your life that seem to be stress factors. Once you know where the stress is coming from, it is easier to manage.

The number one symptom of stress is muscle tension. Stretching and exercising will help flush the stress hormones out of your body. Exercise releases the happy, positive chemicals that can help fight illness and depression naturally. Mediation and relaxation exercises are simple to perform and combine deep breathing, releasing of muscle tension and clearing of negative thoughts. If you practice these exercises regularly, you can use them when needed to lessen the negative effects of stress. Good nutrition and proper sleep will also aid in stress management. If you are not sleeping well, you will have less energy and fewer resources for coping with stress.

So what are some other stress buster activities?

1. **Breathe.** Breathing deeply sends a message to our bodies to relax.
2. **Visualize calm.** You’ve probably heard this before, but going to a happy place in your mind (I enjoy thinking of past vacation spots) can help you relax. For example, try feeling the sand in your toes and remembering what the ocean smells like. (This is especially helpful in calming my mind so I can sleep.)
3. **Take a time out.** Spend time doing something you love. It

doesn’t have to be for hours, and it won’t make your problems go away, but just reading a book or looking through old pictures for 10 minutes can help energize you to take on the next challenge.

4. **Just say no.** We don’t have to do everything. Enough said.
5. **Laugh!** Learning to laugh at ourselves and seeing the humor in any situation can reduce stress. Take a break and watch a funny YouTube clip and just laugh for a minute.
6. **Talk or write it out.** Sometimes it’s nice just to get those stressful feelings out. Talk to someone you trust who is no t involved in the stressful situation or write out your feelings. (You can even burn it after if you want.) Writing in a personal journal can be a great stress reliever, and it can provide something great to share with others.
7. **Get pampered.** Once in a while, it’s okay to do something you wouldn’t normally do just because you are a wonderful person and you deserve it. For example, get a massage, buy yourself a small treat or stop just to smell the roses or enjoy the sunset.
8. **Seek social support.** This is the single most important buffer against stress. It is important to share problems and seek advice from people you trust.
9. **Enjoy leisure activities.** Research suggests that leisure activities can be an effective way to ward off the negative effects of stress. Hobbies and other fun activities provide a meaningful way to sharpen skills, express creativity or just blow off steam.
    - **Drawing** can get you in touch with your artistic side and be useful as a way to process emotions or distract yourself. The end result will be something beautiful and personal that you can enjoy or share. **Painting** has similar stress management benefits as drawing but through a different medium. **Coloring** is the new adult stress

management tool. There are many online tools and even adult coloring books available.
    - **Gardening** can be a great stress reliever as you are out in the sunshine, fresh air and have the satisfaction of sprucing up your home!
    - The repetitive motion required for **knitting** and **crocheting** can provide an outlet for nervous energy while creating beautiful gifts for yourself or others.
    - **Photography** can be a great hobby to help you see things differently as you look through the lens. You have a hobby to call your own, and you see the world as a more beautiful place in your daily life.
10. **Make the choice.** Look for the good things in your day instead of the negatives. Positive thinking is a choice. You'll begin to notice "gifts" that you previously took for granted. The frazzled mentality will disappear, and you will become less stressed. A positive attitude can't change a negative situation into a positive one, but it can help you enjoy the ride a lot more.

This article was written by Cindy Nelson, Utah State University Extension assistant professor