



STRESS BUSTING TIPS



SHANNON HUMPHREY



HAVE ENOUGH SLEEP

A good day starts with a good nights sleep

The tired brain sees the negative in every situation. A regular sleep routine will reduce feelings of stress that are exacerbated by fatigue. Going to bed and getting up at the same time every day will regulate sleep patterns.



Avoid using your mobile phone an hour before bed. Charge the phone in a port away from the bed to reduce the temptation to scroll during the night or first thing when you wake up.



Invest in an old fashioned alarm clock to check the time and wake you up.



KNOW YOUR TRIGGERS

And When to Nip it in the Bud

Imagine a scale of 1-10. Number 1 is zen, 10 is steam coming out of your ears angry. We all have a point when we can feel ourselves moving up the scale towards anger, frustration and stress. Before you get to a 6,7 and upwards. Do something to break the cycle. Literally stop what you are doing, if only for a few minutes. The sooner you nip it in the bud the easier it will be to gather your thoughts and focus on the task in front of you.



Go for a walk or do some form of exercise if you can. Stress builds up the 'fight or flight' hormone adrenaline which the body needs to process, going for a brisk walk will release it naturally and bring your body back to a calm state.



Have a drink of water, or green tea which is full of antioxidants and reduces stress.



Dehydration causes headaches and increases stress levels. Studies have shown that dehydration leads to higher levels of the stress hormone cortisol—making it harder to deal with everyday issues. By staying hydrated you will be better equipped to deal everyday problems.

KNOW YOUR LIMITS

It's OK to say NO

It might not feel it at the time, but it's OK to say no. There might be pressure to take on additional work, tasks or challenges for the 'team' but when you are already at capacity, taking on extra responsibilities is likely to leave you stressed, frustrated and resentful. Be honest and upfront, don't say you 'might' do something if you know it's a definite no. People will respect your honesty.



BE PREPARED

Maintain Your Control

Stress is predominantly caused by either a lack of control over a situation or trying to have too much control. There are lots of things in life we can't control. The weather, traffic, what other people do, or don't do.



The only thing we can control is ourselves and our reaction to external situations. Being prepared, where possible, is a good way to maintain a sense of control.



Making a list of jobs that need doing and ticking them off as completed will give you a sense of accomplishment and reduce stress as the list becomes shorter.



Make sure to prioritise jobs in order of deadlines and importance. It's tempting to do the easiest first, but it's better to do the harder tasks while you are fresh and alert.



BE MORE STEVE

Organise Your Wardrobe

There's nothing more stressful on a morning than trying to find something clean, tidy and ironed to wear. The clock seems to speed up as we search for missing socks, or clothing that doesn't have remnants of yesterdays lunch on it. Steve Jobs famously wore the same outfit every day. It was "One less decision [he had to make] every day". Reducing his stress levels.



Taking 30 minutes on a weekend to prepare your clothes for the week ahead will save you untold amounts of stress. Make sure they are clean, ironed and hung up, ready to slip into. Same applies if you have little people in the house, do the same for them. It will make your mornings much easier and far less stressful.



REDUCE ALCOHOL

Drink for Pleasure not to De-Stress

Drinking excessive amounts of alcohol lowers inhibitions and makes behavior more reckless. Research from *Drinkaware*, indicates that suicide attempts, suicidal ideation and death by suicide is increased when alcohol is consumed. Alcohol is a chemical depressant. It disrupts the delicate balance of chemicals and processes in the brain, affecting thoughts, feelings and actions. Even though you might think a drink can help you relax, in fact over time, regularly drinking to deal with feelings of stress can interfere with what your brain needs for good mental health as well as disrupt sleep routines, making stress harder to deal with.



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BE MORE MINDFUL

And less Mind-Full

Believe me when I tell you that anything can be done mindfully. Eating, drinking, talking, walking, listening to music, even working. Mindfulness is all about being immersed in the moment, focusing on the here and now without judgment. Not remembering the past or dreading the future.


 Practicing mindfulness regularly allows us to build up a picture or pattern of behavior, it will highlight the stressors in our lives and the steps we can take to avoid them altogether or manage them in a calmer less-reactionary way.





SET CLEAR BOUNDARIES

Everyone Needs a Cut off Point

Checking and responding to emails out of working hours has become the 'norm' for many employees. Even taking work on holiday (known as Leaveism) is becoming more accepted as the pressure to meet deadlines encroaches into personal time.

 If you must check emails, give yourself a cut off time to read/ respond. Turn off notifications and if need be, use an app to lock your account until morning.

 If you are responding to emails because you don't have time to meet the demands of your job during working hours, speak to your line manager about your workloads. They might be able to work out something to ease your concerns and workloads.


 Taking additional work home with you will inevitably contribute to stress and eventual burnout. According to the HSE the average person who is absent from work because of stress, is off for 22 days.




SPEAK TO A FRIEND

A Problem Shared

If you don't tell somebody that something is wrong, they won't know and they can't help.

 Confiding in a friend, family member or colleague about what has been stressing you out will feel like a huge relief.


 Speaking to someone who isn't connected to the issue can often help give fresh perspective, they might be able to offer a solution you hadn't thought of. And even if they can't, just listening can sometimes be enough.





EAT A BALANCED DIET


Prepare in Advance if You Can

When we are stressed the last thing we want to think about is eating a healthy balanced diet. We want salt, sugar and fat!

 Work stress, money or time-bound stressors, like achieving deadlines, tend to trigger over-eating. We go for sugary foods or caffeinated drinks to give us more energy which triggers the reward systems in the brain and makes us feel temporarily better.

 Bereavement, worry and personal relationship stress might cause us to stop eating all together.

 If you can, prepare at least one meal the night before so you know you have something balanced to eat the following day. Then you aren't skipping meals or relying on vending machines or grab and go unhealthy choices. If in doubt grab a banana or potassium-rich foods such, as pumpkin seeds. Researchers say that they may help reduce symptoms of stress and anxiety.


 Don't eat at your desk! Enjoy some fresh air if you can. Or eat in a canteen or communal area. Engage with conversation, not your phone.




STOP MULTITASKING

It won't Get Things Done Faster

We all know someone who wears being busy and stressed as a badge of honor. They are involved in everything all the time and spend every waking moment spinning plates. They delight in telling us how good they are at multitasking.

 Multitasking isn't effective. It has been scientifically demonstrated that the brain cannot effectively or efficiently switch between tasks, so you lose time. It takes four times longer to recognise new things so you're not saving time; multitasking actually costs time. You also lose time because you often make mistakes which causes more stress and panic when you have to re-do your work.

 It takes about 30 minutes to get into flow state, where you are working quickly and efficiently without distractions. Set yourself a timer for about an hour (or whatever feels comfortable to you) block notifications and ask people not to disturb you during this time. Turn off tabs on your laptop or PC. Working this way will get your tasks completed more quickly and efficiently. Then you can move onto your next job. No multitasking required.



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REMEMBER THE GOOD STUFF



Write it Down

It's easy to lose sight of the good stuff that happens when we are in the midst of a stressful situation.

Take a few minutes each day, to write down something good that has happened that day. Before bed is best because it gives you a positive focus to go to sleep on.

The more you practice looking for positive situations the more your brain will help you find. Some days it might be harder than others, keep looking. You'll find something.

DO SOMETHING NICE



Just for You!

When we are stressed, busy and feel like everything is getting on top of us it's easy to feel guilty about taking time off, or getting away from the situation.

This is EXACTLY the time that you should do something just for you. A long soak in the bath, a walk, listen to some music that makes you want to dance, strum the guitar, read a book, watch a film that makes you laugh your head off. Anything to give your brain a break, it will release your tension and ease the stress if only for a few minutes.

ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY

You Get to Choose What's Next

Life is full of ups and downs. Things that make us feel happy and things that cause us to feel stressed and out of control.

You have a personal responsibility to manage how you react to what is going on around you by making the best decisions and choices for you. Adopting healthy coping strategies will make the not so good stuff easier to navigate.

ADD YOUR OWN TIPS HERE

What Stress Busting Tips would you like to add?

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USEFUL CONTACTS



Citizens Advice

Online free advice from Citizens Advice to help you find a way forward, whatever the problem. Our research enables us to campaign on issues affecting

CitizensAdvice

CLICK HERE

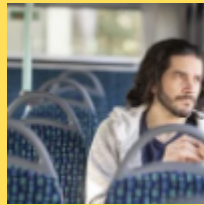


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Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities

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Pathways for Positivity Wellbeing Workshops

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