

Stomp Out Stress!

Stressed Out?

Stress is a part of everyday life—a common human reaction when we're facing various changes and challenges. In fact, stress can happen to us as a result of both positive and negative events. For instance, we can experience stress when we have an important exam coming up or when we're anticipating graduation and starting a new job. Everyone experiences stress, but we all react to it differently. The key is learning to cope with stress in a healthy and productive way.



Why Do We Have Stress?

Believe it or not, we need some degree of stress to motivate us and to make us perform better at important tasks. However, too much stress can be harmful and can actually impair our performance. Both positive and negative events in one's life can be stressful. The stress on its own isn't the problem; it is how we interpret and respond to stressful situations that determine if the stress is harmful.

Major Life Changes & Events that Can Be Stressful:

- Being away from friends and family for the first time.
- Transferring to a new school.
- Pregnancy.
- A new job.
- Death of a loved one.
- Time pressure.
- A break-Up.
- Noise and city living.
- Financial problems.
- Doing poorly in school.

Recognizing Stress:

The first step to effectively managing stress is to recognize when it is occurring. When we're feeling stressed, we may experience one or more of the following:

- Muscle Stiffness (especially neck and shoulders)
- Headaches & backaches
- Upset Stomach, Nausea, or Diarrhea
- Problems with Sleep (too little or too much)
- Feeling Worn-Out All the Time
- Feeling anxious or depressed
- Being less patient with others
- Withdrawing from friends and family

The Dangers of Stress:

Stress can cause have many negative effects on your mind and body, including:

- Difficulties Sleeping
- Stomach Aches & Ulcers
- Headaches
- Poor Academic Performance
- High Blood Pressure
- Heart Disease
- Depression
- Problems with Anger & Irritability
- Strained Relationships



26 WAYS TO STOMP OUT STRESS

1. Exercise and sports
2. Walks and enjoying NYC
3. A hot bath or shower
4. Talking to a friend
5. Time outs from study and work
6. A night out, an afternoon off
7. Deep breathing (see below)
8. Meditation (see below)
9. Listening to or playing music
10. Drawing
11. Going to a museum or gallery
12. Going to a movie or show
13. Asserting yourself: saying no when you need to. Expressing your opinions, feelings and needs.
14. Healthy eating
15. Getting enough sleep
16. Writing in a journal
17. Cleaning your room
18. Laughing!
19. Praying
20. Getting tasks done promptly
21. Reading for pleasure
22. Stopping smoking and other bad habits
23. Stopping to appreciate what you have: feeling grateful!
24. Helping someone else!
25. Cutting down on your schedule—even slightly
26. Setting realistic goals and expectations: Accepting that you're not perfect!

STRESS REDUCING EXERCISES

BREATHE SLOWLY & DEEPLY

1. Inhale slowly (count to four 1-2-3-4) and deeply through your nose and into the "bottom" of your lungs.
2. Pause briefly.
3. Exhale slowly (count 1-2-3-4) through your mouth, allowing your whole body to just let go.
4. If you wish, each time you exhale silently say "relax", "calm" or "let go."
5. Do 10 cycles of inhaling, pausing and exhaling.

BE MINDFUL

1. Sit down in a comfortable chair and close your eyes.
2. Allow whatever arises in your awareness—images, sounds, physical sensations, feelings, thoughts—to come and go, to move freely.
3. Don't judge what passes through your mind. Accept what's on your mind now—and then gently let it go.
4. Do this for a few minutes.
5. Take a few more breaths before slowly opening your eyes.

MEDITATE

1. Choose a word or phrase to help you focus. Examples are "peace" or "relax" or "let go."
2. Silently repeat the word. You may close your eyes or gaze on an object.
3. Disregard distracting thoughts. Whenever your attention drifts, simply return to silently repeating the word.
4. As you repeat the word, slowly relax your muscles. Breathe easily and naturally.

DEFLATE COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

1. **Recognize** if you have negative thoughts about a problem—unrealistically pessimistic, hopeless or angry thoughts.
1. **Stop:** Consciously call a mental time out.
2. **Breathe:** Take a few deep breaths to help release the tension these thoughts bring.
3. **Act:** Decide how to begin dealing with the problem. What practical steps can you take rather than wallowing in negative thoughts?
5. **Repeat:** Expect the negative thoughts to return. When they do, follow the same procedure: stop them, breathe, and recommit to positive action.