



EFFECTIVE WAYS TO REDUCE AND MANAGE STRESS

Stress can lead to many negative outcomes in your life. It can also be managed if you know how to recognise it and how to cope with it.

Stress is more serious than we give it credit for and it can manifest in many negative outcomes in your life. Getting to the root of stress and managing it effectively can turn your life around to the point where you begin to thrive. In order to combat stress, you need to understand what it is and how it comes to be.

- › Runny stomach or constipation
- › Low sex drive
- › Low self-esteem
- › Feelings of inadequacy
- › Weight gain or weight loss

These symptoms can be present on their own, but usually come in bundles with each other. They also all build on one another, making the stressful situation that much worse. The first step in counteracting these symptoms is to recognise that there is a problem. Acknowledging it is half of the battle won.

Steps to take when feeling stressed

If you're feeling stressed and you've identified that you have a problem, ask yourself the following questions:

What is the root of your stress?

- › Try and identify what is causing you stress and why. If you cannot, then think about what instances in your life give you feelings of anxiety. You might find your stress closely linked to that.
- › Can you find a solution for this stress? If it's work-related, can you reduce your work load or find more effective ways of dealing with it? If it's a person you have to deal with at work, can you talk to them about it or perhaps be moved to another department?
- › If you cannot change the physical situation, try and find a way to accept it and let it go.

Is there a lifestyle issue taking place here?

- › Are you trying to achieve too much and place too much pressure on yourself to get too much done in your day?
- › Are there responsibilities you can hand over to a family member, friend or colleague?

What else can you do to overcome stress?

There are many practices you can adopt that will help you deal with stress. It sometimes feels like adding something new to your life will cause added stress, but if it is going to counteract the stressful situations, then it can only be of benefit.

Exercise regularly

Exercise helps feed oxygen to parts of your body in ways that rejuvenate and revive you. The practice of exercising also releases endorphins, which are feel-good hormones that lift your mood and make it easier to cope in all situations.

Adopt healthy eating patterns

Healthy eating will naturally make you feel better and will balance the way your body works, removing physical pressure from you. It will also remove the possibility of encountering diet-related diseases. Feed your body with the right nutrients and you will find that the food doesn't affect your mood swings.

Take time out

Take some time to do the things that you enjoy, no matter how little time you have available. Read books, go for walks, have a swim, do arts and crafts. Find ways to be quiet by yourself to give yourself time to reflect and recharge.

Be mindful

Meditation is one of the best ways to cope with stress and there are loads of free mobile apps that can offer you this beneficial practice. You can also attend meditation classes that will help you recognise and deal with stresses and stressful behaviour.



WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a feeling of being under pressure on a

grand scale. Pressure is normal and acceptable, but stress comes about when you start feeling like the pressure is difficult to cope with. These instances can become cumulative, where one stresses load on top of another one, making you feel like normal activities are far too difficult to handle.

How can I identify stress?

Stress is easy to identify as it presents itself in many different ways. Some of the common ways that stress reveals itself are as follows:

- › Irritability with yourself or with others
- › Mood swings
- › Anger and feelings of outrage
- › Difficulty concentrating
- › Constant worry
- › Constant feelings of anxiety
- › Heart palpitations
- › Nervous sweats
- › Inability to relax
- › Inability to sleep
- › Feelings of depression
- › Eating large amounts of food when not hungry
- › Not eating enough food, even when hungry
- › Resorting to caffeine, alcohol or drugs to cope