

AHMA
PAM DECHOW-SPEAKER
THE ROSS MANAGEMENT GROUP



Stress Management Tips

All stress isn't bad. Stress can initiate change, help us focus on the task at hand, and in some cases even save our lives. Yet, when stress builds up, it can result in the opposites— and cause us to spin our wheels, keep us from concentrating, and cause bodily injury and even loss of life.

The first tip in managing stress is to recognize your stressors. The next step is to put each of them in their place. The following stress management tips, based on some old and some new adages, can help you do just that!

Take a Deep Breath and Count to Ten—

Taking a deep breath or two adds oxygen to your system, which almost instantly helps you relax. In addition, taking a moment to step back can help you maintain your composure, which in the long run, is what you need to work rationally through a stressful situation.

Start with “take a deep breath” and...

1. Count to ten (or more or less as the situation warrants!)
2. Stand up and stretch. Remember relaxation is the opposite of stress.
3. Stand up and smile. Try it! You'll feel better!
4. Take a short walk. If you're at work, take a bathroom break or get a glass of water. Do something that changes your focus. When you come back to the problem, chances are it won't seem nearly as bad.
5. In the book *Gone With the Wind*, Scarlett O'hara says, “I can't think about that right now. If I do, I'll go crazy. I'll think about that tomorrow.” Good advice!

Stop and Smell the Roses—

“Things happen” and sometimes “bad things happen to good people”. If we let them, stressful events can build up, wall us in, and eventually stop us from enjoying the good things in life.

1. **Take the time.** Too often we put the pleasantries of life on the back burner, telling ourselves we don't “have time” or can't “make time” for them. However,

actually, time is the only thing we do completely own. While we can't "make" a day that's longer than 24 hours, each of us starts the day with exactly that amount of time. Take a part of your time to recognize the good things in your life.

2. **Sleep on it.** Every coin has two sides and every issue has both pros and cons. List them both then put the list away and take a second look tomorrow. Sometimes "sleeping on" a situation changes the minuses to pluses.
3. **Every cloud has a silver lining.** After all, rain makes things grow! Ben Franklin found good in a bolt of lightning. Find the good in your stressful situation by listing the negative surges and determining what it will take to make them into positive charges!

"A Man's Got to Know His Limitations—"

Knowing yourself and your limits may be the most important way to manage stress effectively.

1. **Dare to say no.** One more little thing may be the "straw that breaks the camel's back". It's okay to say "No", "I can't", or "Later".
2. **Acquit yourself.** Sometimes events really are out of control and you really are "Not Guilty". Quit blaming yourself.
3. **Be pro-active in finding peace.** Those who unsuccessfully use the crutches of drugs and/or alcohol to alleviate stress often find themselves in a twelve-step program like A.A. where one of the mainstays is the Serenity Prayer:

"God grant me the Serenity to accept the things I cannot change; The Courage to change the things I can; and the Wisdom to know the difference."

4. **When you need help, get help.** Even Atlas couldn't bear the weight of the world on his shoulders forever. Whether you need help from kids or spouse in hauling groceries into the house, help from a colleague to solve a work-related problem, or professional help to find the causes of and effectively manage your stress, getting the help you need is in itself a major stress management tip!

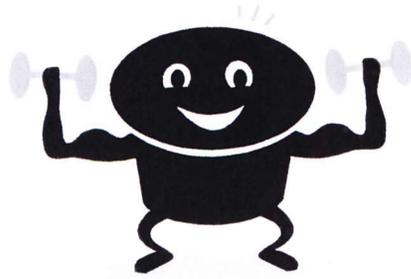
Other Tips to practice

- Get a good night's rest.
- Eat healthily.
- Listen to your favorite music.
- Exercise, participate in a sport or engage in fun activity.
- Plan out your time and prioritize.
- Talk to a friend about your problems, don't hold it in.
- Get a massage.
- Take a nap.
- Take a warm bath.

- Read a book or watch TV. **All are easy excellent tips that help.**



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Stress Relieving Exercises

Surprise yourself! Although you may not think of exercise as stress relieving (if you've ever walked a treadmill for a stress test), a healthy body is a formidable weapon to combat stress. Of course, a full-blown exercise regime can't be completed at your desk, but there are several easy exercises that you can do to relieve tension and reduce stress. Even if your job is physically taxing, the exercises below are designed to help you unwind, relax, and reduce stress.

1. **Blow it off.** Since breathing comes naturally, deep breathing is often overlooked as an exercise, but it's an excellent stress reducer. Breathe in while tucking in your tummy and feel the air as it expands your lungs and your chest. Breathe in to the count of four and hold it for two counts. Then exhale to the count of four. Take two to four deep breathes several times a day and soon daily stressors may well be "gone with the wind!"
2. **Get up and stretch.** Visualize the stress flooding from your back, legs, your shoulders, and pour out of your fingertips and toes. Add to your stretches by taking the time to learn a few yoga positions, which you can find in books and videos as well as yoga classes.
3. **Take a short walk after lunch or in lieu of a coffee break.** A brisk ten or fifteen minute walk each day is not only physically beneficial but transfers your focus from your problems to the scenery along your route, whether it's the good-looking person in the hallway or the trees in the neighborhood park.
4. **Squeeze a lemon.** P.T. Barnum said, "When life hands you a lemon, make lemonade!" Squeezing a lemon or tennis ball is a good way to keep your fingernails from biting into your palms! If you crush the fruit or the tennis ball, either get a rubber ball or go on to a more vigorous exercise to reduce your stress!
5. **Progressive relaxation** is especially beneficial when stress keeps you from getting a good night's sleep. Start at your toes and "tell" them to relax. When you feel them relaxing move to your feet, ankles, calf muscles, knees, thighs and so on up your torso to your shoulders and finally to the top of your head or alternatively down through your arms to your fingertips (if you make it that far before you're asleep!)
6. **Dance.** Join an aerobics class, a tai chi class or just turn on the tunes and dance. Dancing has a double advantage in that along with exercise, music is a great stress reducer.