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 insurmountable.
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

- 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.