

Don't let stress control you!

Stress can be a killer – literally. While we can't avoid stress, we can learn ways to manage it better. We asked our stress counselors for their best tips on reducing stress in both our personal and professional lives. Here's what they said:

Track your stress. Keep a short daily journal, noting what caused you stress. Writing is both a calming exercise and will help you process. Over time, you may see patterns that give you clues about triggers.

Spend time with the people who replenish you. No matter how busy, carve out the time to be with people who care about you and build you up. Try to limit your exposure to toxic people who tear you down, instead spend more time with individuals who have a positive outlook on life.

Meditate. Nothing formal, simply get in the habit of setting aside a few minutes a day to find a quiet corner, shut out the day's distractions, and focus on a simple thought – such as memory of a peaceful place that you love. Concentrate on your breathing.

Express yourself. Don't bottle up your feelings. Learn how to tell people your feelings in appropriate ways. Practice tactful but firm honesty. Get your negative feelings out of your system and move on.

Plan ahead. Leaving things to chance can lead to trouble. Planning and time management can help prevent time crunches.

Take care of your health. Eat nutritious meals and avoid junk food. Find time to exercise. The benefits of physical activity can yield a calming effect on our minds. Try yoga or whatever you like best – walk, run, swim, or take a bike ride.



Connect with nature. Exposure to beautiful, natural places can be restorative. Spend time in outdoor places, pay attention to the detail, and focus on really taking it in.

Learn how to say no. It can be tough to set limits with an authority figure or a loved one, but learn when and how to say no so you do not get overextended.

Have fun. Do something you enjoy every day. Find activities that release energy such as dancing, sports or activities that calm you like listening to music, reading a book, or doing a jigsaw puzzle.

Get a pet. Pets can be very therapeutic. Playing with a cat, talking to a bird or taking daily walks with a dog can relieve stress.

Give yourself a break. Accept that it's okay to be imperfect or make mistakes. Resolve to do better the next time. Don't beat yourself up.

Have a lifeline. Call a counselor at your EAP if things get to be too much. We're here 24/7.