

1. Eat and drink to optimize your health

Some people try to reduce stress by drinking alcohol or eating too much. These actions may seem to help in the moment, but actually may add to stress in the long run. Caffeine also can compound the effects of stress. While consuming a healthy, balanced diet can help combat stress.



2. Exercise regularly

In addition to having physical health benefits, exercise has been shown to be a powerful stress reliever. Consider noncompetitive aerobic exercise, strengthening with weights or movement activities like yoga or Tai Chi, and set reasonable goals for yourself. Aerobic exercise has been shown to release endorphins — natural substances that help you feel better and maintain a positive attitude.



3. Stop using tobacco and nicotine products

People who use nicotine often refer to it as a stress reliever. However, nicotine actually places more stress on your body by increasing physical arousal and reducing blood flow and breathing. Plus, it can worsen chronic pain, so if you're experiencing prolonged tension and body aches, smoking won't help.



4. Study and practice relaxation techniques

Taking the time to relax every day helps manage stress and protect your body from the effects of stress. You can choose from a variety of techniques, such as deep breathing, guided imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness meditation. Many online and smartphone apps provide guidance on these techniques. Although some require purchase costs, many are available free of charge.



5. Reduce triggers of stress

If you're like most people, your life may be filled with too many demands and too little time. For the most part, these demands are ones we've chosen. But you can free up time by practicing time-management skills like asking for help when it's appropriate, setting priorities, pacing yourself and reserving time to take care of yourself.



6. Examine your values and live by them

The more your actions reflect your beliefs, the better you'll feel, no matter how busy your life is. Use your values when choosing your activities.

"Considering the stressful demands and responsibilities we face on a daily basis, it's important to engage in activities that are in line with our values and speak to us on a personal level," encourages Dr. Borland.



7. Assert yourself

It's OK to say "no" to demands on your time and energy that'll place too much stress on you. You don't always have to meet the expectations of others.



8. Set realistic goals and expectations

It's also OK — and healthy — to realize you can't be 100% successful at everything all at once. Be mindful of the things you can control and work on accepting the things that you can't control.



9. Sell yourself to yourself

When you're feeling overwhelmed, remind yourself of what you do well. There are ways you can build a healthy sense of self-esteem.



10. Try biofeedback

This behavioral technique helps you learn stress reduction skills by providing information about muscle tension, heart rate and other vital signs as you attempt to relax. It's used to gain control over certain bodily functions that cause tension and physical pain. Biofeedback can be used to help you learn how your body responds in stressful situations, and how to cope better. If a headache, such as a migraine, begins slowly, many people can use biofeedback to stop the attack before it becomes full-blown. If you're interested in any of these techniques, ask your healthcare provider for more information or other suggestions they may have. Often, counseling can help you recognize stress factors that may not even

be readily obvious.

