

The 7 best stress management techniques I know!

By Lyndsay Swinton

The best stress management techniques are those that are easy to use. Quick to learn and quick to implement, you can use them to manage your own stress levels or teach them to help others manage theirs.

Stress management techniques help you control of your stress and be a healthier, happier and more pleasant person to be around. Let's cut to the chase and spell out the best ones I know...

1. Acknowledge stress is good

Make stress your friend! Based on the body's natural "fight or flight" response, that burst of energy will enhance your performance at the right moment. I've yet to see a top sportsman totally relaxed before a big competition. Use stress wisely to push yourself that little bit harder when it counts most.

2. Avoid stress sneezers

Stressed people sneeze stress germs indiscriminately and before you know it, you are infected too!

Protect yourself by recognising stress in others and limiting your contact with them. Or if you've got the inclination, play stress doctor and teach them how to better manage themselves.

3. Learn from the best

When people around are losing their head, who keeps calm? What are they doing differently? What is their attitude? What language do they use? Are they trained and experienced?

Figure it out from afar or sit them down for a chat. Learn from the best stress managers and copy what they do.

4. Practice socially acceptable heavy breathing

You can trick your body into relaxing by using heavy breathing. Breathe in slowly for a count of 7 then breathe out for a count of 11. Repeat the 7-11 breathing until your heart rate slows down, your sweaty palms dry off and things start to feel more normal.

5. Give stressy thoughts the red light

It is possible to tangle yourself up in a stress knot all by yourself. "If this happens, then that might happen and then we're all up the creek!" Most of these things never happen, so why waste all that energy worrying needlessly?

Give stress thought-trains the red light and stop them in their tracks. Okay so it might go wrong – how likely is that, and what can you do to prevent it?

6. Know your trigger points and hot spots

Presentations, interviews, meetings, giving difficult feedback, tight deadlines..... My heart rate is cranking up just writing these down!

Make your own list of stress trigger points or hot spots. Be specific. Is it only presentations to a certain audience that get you worked up? Does one project cause more stress than another? Did you drink too much coffee?

Knowing what causes you stress is powerful information, as you can take action to make it less stressful. Do you need to learn some new skills? Do you need extra resources? Do you need to switch to de-caf?

7. Burn the candle at one end

Lack of sleep, poor diet and no exercise wreaks havoc on our body and mind. Kind of obvious, but worth mentioning as it's often ignored as a stress management technique. Listen to your mother and don't burn the candle at both ends!

And those are the best stress management techniques I know! Learn them, use them and teach them, and be a great stress manager.

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