



Ways to Decrease Stress

1. Learn relaxation exercises (abdominal breathing and muscle relaxation techniques) and take breaks from stressful situations. Activities like listening to music, talking to a friend, drawing, writing, or spending time with a pet can reduce stress. Building a network of friends who can help you cope with life's challenges in a positive way can also help.
2. If you are feeling too busy, consider cutting out an activity or two, or choosing just the ones that are most important to you. Also, don't try to be perfect — no one is. If you need help on something, ask for it.
3. Learn practical coping skills, such as breaking a large task into smaller, more attainable tasks.
4. Rehearse and practice how to respond to situations that cause stress, such as taking a speech class, if talking in front of a class makes you anxious. It might also be useful to develop assertiveness skills, such as stating feelings in polite, firm, but not overly aggressive or passive ways.
5. Decrease negative self-talk: challenge negative thoughts about yourself with alternative neutral or positive thoughts. "My life will never get better" can be transformed into "I may feel hopeless now, but my life will probably get better if I work at it and get some help." Also learn to feel good about doing a competent or "good enough" job, rather than demanding perfection from yourself and others, if that is an issue.
6. Get a good night's sleep to give your mind and body enough time to rest and prepare for another day. This helps to get you ready to deal with any negative stresses the day may bring.
7. Take care of your body by exercising and eating healthy foods regularly; avoiding excess caffeine intake, which can increase feelings of anxiety and agitation; and avoiding illegal drugs, alcohol, and tobacco.

