

LIFESTYLE CHANGES FOR MORE EFFECTIVE STRESS MANAGEMENT

1. Learn to plan
Disorganization can breed stress. Having too many projects going simultaneously often leads to confusion, forgetfulness and the sense that uncompleted projects are hanging over your head. When possible, take on projects one at a time and work on them until completed. If you must take on more than one project at a time, prioritize work to be done and space deadlines far enough apart to control the build-up of stress.
2. Recognize and accept limits
Most of us set unreasonable and perfectionistic goals for ourselves. We can never be perfect, so we often have a sense of failure or inadequacy no matter how well we perform. Set achievable goals for yourself.
3. Have fun
You need occasionally to escape from the pressures of life and have fun. Find pastimes which are absorbing and enjoyable to you, no matter what your level of ability.
4. Be a positive person
Avoid criticizing others. Learn to praise the things you like in others. Focus upon the good qualities those around you possess. Learn to do this for yourself also. Notice and reward yourself for your good qualities and for even small improvements.
5. Learn to tolerate and forgive
Intolerance of others leads to frustration and anger. An attempt to really understand the way other people feel can make you more accepting of them. Again it is important to become aware and accepting of your own feelings, as well.
6. Avoid unnecessary competition
There are many competitive situations in life that we cannot avoid. Too much concern with winning in too many areas of life can create excessive tension and anxiety, and make one unnecessarily aggressive.
7. Get regular physical exercise
Check with your physician before beginning any exercise program. You will be more likely to stay with an exercise program if you choose one that you really enjoy, rather than one that is hard work and drudgery.
8. Learn a systematic, drug-free method of relaxing
Meditation, yoga, autogenic training or progressive relaxation can be learned from various accredited teachers and licensed psychotherapists.
9. Talk out your troubles
Find a friend, member of the clergy, counselor, or psychotherapist you can be open with. Expressing your bottled-up tension to a sympathetic ear can be helpful.

From an article by Patricia McCormack, Ames Daily Tribune, Iowa, Sept. 6, 1978, using information for Stress, Sanity, and Survival by Woolfolk and Richardson.