

Stress

Busters

# 52 Proven Stress Reducers

1. Get up fifteen minutes earlier in the morning. The inevitable morning mishaps will be less stressful.
2. Prepare for the morning the evening before. Set the breakfast table, make lunches, put out the clothes you plan to wear, etc.
3. Don't rely on your memory. Write down appointment times, when to pick up the laundry, when library books are due, etc. ("The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory." - Old Chinese Proverb)
4. Make duplicates of all keys. Bury a house key in a secret spot in the garden and carry a duplicate car key in your wallet, apart from your key ring.
5. Sing when you are down it boosts endorphins.
6. Practice preventive maintenance: your car, appliances, home and relationships will be less likely to break down/fall apart "at the worst possible moment."
7. Be prepared to wait. A paperback can make a wait in a post office line almost pleasant.
8. Procrastination is stressful. Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.
9. Plan ahead. Don't let the gas tank get below one-quarter full. Keep a well-stocked emergency shelf of home staples. Don't wait until you're down to your last bus token or postage stamp to buy more, etc.
10. Don't put up with something that doesn't work right. If your alarm clock, wallet, shoe laces, windshield wipers, whatever are a constant aggravation, get them fixed or get new ones.
11. Allow 15 minutes of extra time to get to appointments. Plan to arrive at an airport one hour before domestic departures.

12. Eliminate (or restrict) the amount of caffeine in your diet.
13. Always set up contingency plans, "just in case." ("If for some reason either of us is delayed, here's what we'll do.." Or, "If we get split up in the shopping centre, here's where we'll meet.")
14. Relax your standards. The world will not end if the grass doesn't get mowed this weekend.
15. Pollyanna-Power! For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10 or 50 or 100 blessings. Count'em!
16. Ask questions. Taking a few moments to repeat back directions, what someone expects of you, etc., can save hours. (The old "the hurrieder I go, the behinder I get," idea).
17. Say "No!." Saying "no" to extra projects, social activities, and invitations you know you don't have the time or energy for takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, everyday, needs quiet time to relax and be alone.
18. Unplug your phone. Want to take a long bath, meditate, sleep, or read without interruption? Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect. (The possibility of there being a terrible emergency in the next hour or so is almost nil). Or use an answering machine.
19. Turn needs into preferences. Our basic physical needs translate into food, water, and keeping warm. Everything else is a preference. Don't get attached to preferences.
20. Simplify, simplify, simplify...
21. Make friends with non-worriers. Nothing can get you into the habit of worrying faster than associating with chronic worrywarts.
22. Get up and stretch periodically if your job requires that you sit for extended periods.
23. Wear earplugs. If you need to find quiet at home, pop in some earplugs.
24. Get enough sleep. If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.
25. Create order out of chaos. Organize your home and workspace so that you always know

exactly where things are. Put things away where they belong and you won't have to go through the stress of losing things.

26. When feeling stressed, most people tend to breathe in short, shallow breaths. When you breathe like this, stale air is not expelled, oxidation of the tissues is incomplete and muscle tension frequently results. Check your breathing throughout the day and before, during and after high pressure situations. If you find your stomach muscles are knotted and your breathing is shallow, relax all your muscles and take several deep, slow breaths. Note how, when you're relaxed, both your abdomen and chest expand when you breathe.

27. Writing your thoughts and feelings down (in a journal, or a paper to be thrown away) can help you clarify things and can give you a renewed perspective.

28. Try the following yoga technique whenever you feel the need to relax. Inhale deeply through your nose to the count of eight. Then with lips puckered, exhale very slowly through your mouth to the count of 15 or for as long as you can. Concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel the tension dissolve. Repeat 10 times.

29. Inoculate yourself against a feared event. For example, before speaking in public, take time to go over every part of the experience in your mind. Imagine what you'll wear, what the audience will look like, how you will present your talk, what the questions will be and how you will answer them, etc. Visualize the experience the way you would have it be. You'll likely find that when the time comes to make the actual presentation, it will be "old hat" and much of your anxiety will have fled.

30. When the stress of having to get a job done gets in the way of getting the job done, diversion (a voluntary change in activity and/or environment) may be just what you need.

31. Talk it out. Discussing your problems with a trusted friend can help clear your mind of confusion so you can concentrate on problem solving.

32. One of the most obvious ways to avoid unnecessary stress is to select an environment (work, home, leisure) which is in line with your personal needs and desires. If you hate desk jobs, don't accept a job which requires that you sit at a desk all day. If you hate to talk politics, don't associate with people who love to talk politics, etc.

33. Learn to live one day at a time.

34. Every day, do something you really enjoy.
35. Add an ounce of love to everything you do.
36. Take a hot bath or shower (or a cool one in the summertime) to relieve tension.
37. Do something for somebody else. Make a meal for someone who is in need.
38. Focus on understanding rather than on being understood; on loving rather than on being loved.
39. Do something that will improve your appearance. Looking better can help you feel better.
40. Schedule a realistic day. Avoid the tendency to schedule back-to-back appointments. Allow time between appointments for a breathing spell.
41. Become more flexible. Some things are worth not doing perfectly and some issues are well to compromise upon.
42. Eliminate destructive self-talk; "I'm too old to...," "I'm too fat to...," etc.
43. Use your weekend time for a change of pace. If your work week is slow and patterned, make sure there is action and time for spontaneity built into your weekends. If your work week is fast-paced and full of people and deadlines, seek peace and solitude during your days off. Feel as if you are not accomplishing anything at work? Tackle a job on the weekend which you can finish to your satisfaction.
44. "Worry about the pennies and the dollars will take of themselves." That's another way of saying: take care of the today's as best you can and the yesterdays and the tomorrows will take care of themselves.
45. Do one thing at a time. When you are with someone, be with that person and with no one or anything else. When you are busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project and forget about everything else you have to do.
46. Allow yourself time-everyday-for privacy, quiet, and introspection.

47. If an especially unpleasant task faces you, do it early in the day and get it over with. Then, the rest of your day will be free of anxiety.
48. Learn to delegate responsibility to capable others.
49. Don't forget to take a lunch break. Try to get away from your desk or work area in body and mind, even if its just for 15 or 20 minutes.
50. Forget about counting to 10. Count to 1,000 before doing something or saying anything that could make matters worse.
51. Have a forgiving view of events and people. Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world.
52. Have an optimistic view of the world. Believe that most people are doing the best they can.

## The following are some great stress relievers you can generally practice while caring for children:

- **Drawing**: Kids generally love to draw, but expressing oneself artistically can be great for adults, too! The next time you're feeling stressed, get out some crisp new crayons (or even your ratty old ones) and create beautiful pictures with your kids. You can work through your feelings in an abstract way and create something beautiful in the process, and your children can create their own beauty.
- **Walking**: You can enjoy the benefits of exercise and let your children enjoy the scenery (or exercise along with you) by walking with them. You can put them in a stroller if they're very small, or let them ride a bike or scooter next to you if they're bigger. (Or, for a less brisk, more meandering walk, let them just walk with you.) This is a great one because it gets you both outside, enjoying nature (or the view of some nice buildings), and away from most frustrations and responsibilities. (If your little ones don't want to sit quietly in a stroller and enjoy the scenery, you can bring a cup of Cheerio's or another small snack to occupy them.)
- **Blowing Bubbles**: This one can keep your little ones happy, giving you a break, and can take your mind off of what's stressing you if you let it. There's something almost meditative about watching the bubbles drift up, and there's real joy in watching the wonder in the eyes of small children enjoying the sight of bubbles, or the playfulness of slightly older children racing to pop them.
- **Enjoying Music**: Music has some extremely useful stress relief properties, and can provide fun opportunities to bond with your children as well. You can sing or dance together and blow off steam, or just relax and enjoy listening. Keeping music on in the background throughout your day can keep you and your children in a more peaceful mood, or get you into a more playful one, depending on what you play.
- **Social Support**: Doing fun things with friends and including your children (and theirs) can supply you with a supportive social outlet, and your children with play dates and opportunities to create friendships and learn social skills. (Most moms are well aware of the importance of having other 'mom' friends, but sometimes we get so busy and overscheduled that we forget to nurture these relationships and draw on this stress reliever when we need it most.)

# Here are some more effective stress relief strategies for parents:

## **Journaling:**

There are many wonderful benefits to journaling, and you can enjoy them while letting your children explore their artistic side. If you have older children, they can journal along with you, writing in their journals as you write in yours. If your kids are younger (and not yet writing), they can keep a picture journal, either expressing their feelings and frustrations through art, drawing pictures of their favourite things, or even practicing learning their letters.

## **Gardening:**

You can relieve a lot of stress through the act of gardening, and it can be a great activity for your children as well. Even small children can help you tend to a garden if they're able to lift a small watering can, and can also have a great time digging in the dirt. Watching seeds grow into plants can be fun and educational for young kids, and older children can take pride in making their home more beautiful by tending to the yard.

## **Yoga:**

Increase flexibility, improve your health, and reduce stress with Yoga, and let your kids enjoy the same benefits by joining you. With them around, you may not be able to get the same type of workout or achieve a true meditative state, but it can still be a bonding experience that relieves stress and encourages health for all of you.

## **Playing With Pets:**

There are proven stress relief benefits of pets, and pets can also be great fun for kids. Playing catch with a Frisbee-loving dog, gently stroking a cat, feeding hay to guinea pigs, or even watching fish swim in an aquarium can help you relieve stress, and can also teach your children to care for others.

## **Lazing About:**

Laying in the grass or a hammock and finding shapes in the clouds or constellations in the stars can also be a great way to relax, while nurturing your children's creativity at the same time. Basking in the sun (during warm seasons) or sitting before a cosy fire (during cold seasons) and just relaxing, or reading a good book, can be very relaxing for you and your kids. And while you can't always get kids, especially small children, to want to slow down when you want them to, reading can help, and just slowing down can be good for you both.

# Ways to calm down quickly when stress sneaks up on you

## **Take a Walk**

Exercise can be a great stress reliever in itself, as it helps you blow off steam and releases endorphins. Taking a walk when stressed provides the bonus of getting you out of the stressful situation and providing some perspective so you can return in a new frame of mind.

## **Take a Breath**

If you're not in a position to leave, you can feel better right away by practicing breathing exercises. Getting more oxygen into your body and releasing physical tension are two ways that breathing exercises can benefit you, and you can do them anytime or anywhere, even if your demanding situation isn't letting up.

## **Take a Mental Break**

If you can steal away a few minutes of peace, visualizations and guided imagery are a wonderful way to restore peace of mind. They're easy to do, and can relax you physically as well as mentally.

## **Reframe Your Situation**

Sometimes we intensify our experience of stressful situations by the way we look at them. If you can look at your situation differently, you may be able to put it into a different perspective--one that causes you less stress! Read more about mental and emotional stress that can be caused by pessimism, type A traits, and other self-sabotaging thought patterns, and learn how you can change the way you look at things. It'll come in handy when you're stressed.

## **Try Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) is a technique where you tense and release all of your muscle groups, leaving your body feel more relaxed afterward. PMR is one of my favourite techniques, as it can be done by just about anyone, and with practice you can fully release virtually all the tension you're feeling in your body in a matter of seconds! This can help you feel more calm and better able to handle the situations at hand. Once you've been able to calm down, you should be in a better position to address whatever stressful situations you're experiencing. It's also a good idea to adopt a few regular stress relievers and healthy lifestyle habits so that you can reduce your overall stress level so that you experience less stress and are less bothered by the stressful situations you do encounter.

# My plan

**My top 5 to work on:**

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5. \_\_\_\_\_

**What I already do:**

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5. \_\_\_\_\_

**What I can do with my children:**

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3. \_\_\_\_\_
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