

# Strategies for Managing Stress

Use whatever stress management strategies suit you and work for you in particular situations. Allow yourself time to adjust if there is a lot of change in your life and above all else be your best friend instead of your own worst enemy.

## Use Coping Techniques

**Exercise:** Release emotional tension through physical activity, eg, sport, gym.

**Relax:** Reduce emotional tension through deep breathing, mediation.

**Talk it out:** Talk through issues as they arise (bottling up turns little niggles into major issues). Share your problem with someone you can trust.

**Write it down:** If you feel unable to talk it out or if there's no one available to talk to, write down your thoughts and feelings in a letter or diary.

**Acknowledge and express your emotions:** Eg, it is OK to feel sad or angry. Feelings are natural reactions – experience them but do not let them affect your behaviour too much.

**Hobbies:** Chose leisure time activities that will give you a sense of satisfaction, eg, pursue a hobby, learn a musical instrument, join an interest group.

**Imagining:** If unable to be around your favourite places, hobbies or people, try imaging your are there to produce those relaxing feelings.

**Time off:** Time off even for a short period of time can increase your energy and capacity to cope with stress.

**Having a sense of humour:** Laughing at jokes or a funny movie releases tension.

**Avoid using drugs:** Excessive use of alcohol, tranquillizers, cigarettes or caffeine will result in unpleasant side effects and long-term abuse can result in addiction.

## Avoid Stress

Try and avoid stress if this is possible but be careful not to avoid problems that do need facing. In some circumstances, it is best to avoid confrontation. For example, consider a mate who has it in for you but is not prepared to sort out the 'problem'. It might be better to avoid meeting that person than have to listen to abuse every time you come face to face.

## Deal With The Problem(s)

Resolve those problems that do need to be faced by working through the following simple, but effective process:

- Define the problem
- Brainstorm possible solutions
- Evaluate the possibilities
- Choose a solution
- Plan the solution
- Act on it

## Question Your Thinking

You might be feeling frustrated or stressed because of the way you chose to view your situation. You could feel better and more in control of your life by changing your assumptions:

- Avoid self-defeating thinking
  - » See obstacles as opportunities and threats as challenges
  - » Use positive coping statements
  - » Expect a positive outcome, not the worst possible one
- Have realistic expectations of yourself and others
  - » Eg, no one in this world is perfect and no one is liked by everyone. It doesn't mean that you (or others) are a failure if you (they) make mistakes or if someone disapproves of your (their) behaviour.



Converge International is your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) provider. To make an appointment or speak to a consultant:

**1300 our eap**  
**1300 687 327**

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## Accept Reality

Accept that some people and some situations won't change, no matter what you do or say. Sticking to your position might be just like banging your head against a brick wall – you will end up hurting yourself and the wall will be unaffected.

## Use Mental Rehearsal

Think through a situation that is of concern to you. Brainstorm all possible scenarios and the options available to you. Rehearse in your mind what you might say and do in each scenario to successfully handle the situation. This prepares you to deal with it when it does arise.

## Increase Your Ability To Handle Stress

Build your physical reserves by:

- Having sufficient and proper rest / sleep
- Maintaining a healthy balanced diet and
- Exercising regularly

## Manage Your Time

Apply the principles of time management to use your time more effectively:

- List all your activities
- Rank them in order of importance / priority
- Using a timesheet, and working from the most to the least important activity, allocate a realistic time to each task (low priority tasks might have to go)
- Try and keep to the timetable, and
- Regularly review and amend your timetable as priorities change

In planning each day, allocate time for rest, recreation and social activities to ensure that you have a balance between work and leisure.

Recognise when you are over-committed and cut back on some of your activities.

Learn to say 'no' and try and reduce procrastination and perfectionism.