

Avoiding burnout and learning resilience

Taking Charge of Stress



Thinking about how to manage stress may be the last thing on your mind right now. It may be that you are just coming back to work after a nice relaxing holiday, and life feels pretty good. But inevitably, September comes and the kids are back to school, work gears back up, and before we know it, today's fast-paced lifestyle takes over and we're feeling burned out again.

What can we do now to ensure we don't end up paying a toll with our health, vitality, and peace-of-mind? Here are some suggestions for increasing stress resistance and avoiding burn out down the road:

Re-evaluate your goals and prioritize them. Evaluate the demands on you in terms of your goals and then identify your ability to meet those demands.

Learn how to say "no." Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, taking on more than you can handle is a surefire recipe for stress.

Re-evaluate your to-do list. Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you've got too much on your plate, drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

Express your feelings instead of bottling them up. If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don't voice your feelings, resentment will build and the situation will remain a source of stress.

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Make healthy lifestyle choices. Eating a health balanced diet, getting plenty of exercise and having enough restful sleep goes a long way when it comes to managing stress.

Don't try to control the uncontrollable. Many things in life are beyond our control— particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to perceived problems.

“ If you see good things about yourself, you are more likely to feel good; the reverse is also true. Challenge yourself to eliminate words such as “always,” “never,” “should,” and “must.” These are telltale marks of self-defeating thoughts and a source of stress.

Re-frame your problems. Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.

Keep the big picture in perspective. Take perspective of the situation. Ask yourself how important whatever is happening will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month, or a year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.

Take time to plan ahead. Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you're stretched too thin and running behind, it's hard to stay calm and focused.

Don't try to be perfect. Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Don't set yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set

reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with “good enough.”

Focus on the positive. When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective. Make a change!

How you think has a profound affect on your emotional and physical well-being. Each time you think a negative thought about yourself, your body reacts as if it were in the throes of a tension-filled situation.

The body's natural relaxation response is a powerful antidote to stress. Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing, visualization, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, and yoga can help you activate this relaxation response. With regular practice, these activities can lead to a reduction in your everyday stress levels. What's more, they also serve a protective quality by teaching you how to stay calm and collected if life should throw you any curveballs.

