



# Less Stress

## Is Less Stress Really Possible?

A life with less stress sounds very appealing to most of us and yet sadly unattainable. You may think there is nothing you can do about your stress level. There will never be more hours in the day, the bills are not going to stop coming, and the demands of work and family responsibilities don't seem to be settling down any time soon. But, you actually have a lot more control than you think. Stress management is all about building a strong and healthy environment to handle stressors with less destruction.

Under stress, the human body activates the nervous system and signals the body to produce two hormones: adrenaline and cortisol. These two hormones speed up your heart rate, blood pressure, metabolism, and breathing rate. Blood vessels open wider to let more blood flow to large muscle groups, putting our muscles on alert. Pupils dilate to improve vision. The liver releases some of its stored glucose to increase the body's energy. And, sweat is produced to cool the body. All this is done to prepare a person to react effectively. However, the stress response can cause problems when it overreacts or fails to turn off and reset itself properly when stressors are left unresolved or are long-term, ongoing events. The problems are experienced in the physical form with tense muscles, exhaustion, nausea, lack of focus, unhealthy food cravings, panic attacks, irritability, moodiness, headaches, and more.

So what's the good news? We can start a path to less stress by identifying areas in our lives that might need a healthy

make-over. We might never be able to avoid certain stressors, but we can learn how to better deal with them. What are the weapons to battle the ravages of stress? Here are the top nine:

- 1. Adequate Exercise.** Regular physical activity most days is proven to reduce stress!
- 2. Limit your caffeine.** Caffeine is a drug that can disrupt sleep interfere with hormones and cause moodiness. Aim for 2 or fewer cups per day.
- 3. Get plenty of sleep.** If you are getting 6 hours of sleep a night or less, you are not getting enough. Sleep is your body's way to recharge and without enough, not only will you be fatigued, but you are doing some serious damage to your body.
- 4. Aim for a balanced eating plan.** A healthy diet ensures your body gets adequate nutrients for optimum fighting power against stressors.
- 5. Surround yourself with people whose company you enjoy!** It is important to remember you can choose who you hang out with. Spend your time nurturing relationships with those who encourage you to be all you can be!
- 6. Time management.** Proper management of time eliminates the feeling of being rushed, worrying about being late, or forgetting appointments.
- 7. Organization/Clean.** Being organized can help you save time, save money, and less fret worrying when things go missing!
- 8. Balanced lifestyle.** The ultimate goal is finding balance between work, relationships, relaxation and fun.
- 9. Smart Financial choices.** If money is a worry you are not alone. But you can start to take control of your situation by seeking help and wise counsel!

### 3 Quick Stress relieving tips

When tension builds and the stress response is strong, there are quick ways to relieve some of the body's negative effects. These tips are simple, easy to do while at home or the office, and they work!

**Deep breathing.** Sit up straight, shoulders back, and inhale for a slow, long 7 seconds. Exhale with the same long, slow breath. Repeat 5 times.

**Stretching.** Stand up and extend your arms slowly toward the ceiling reaching as high as you can. Then release your hands down to your side and touch your toes. Repeat 5 times.

**Roll your shoulders.** Sitting straight up, roll your shoulders 10 times forward and then 10 times backward. Repeat.

Take charge of your stress!

Did you know that **Magnesium** can help relax your nerves and muscles? Some excellent sources of magnesium include pumpkin seeds, nuts, bran cereal, halibut, quinoa, spinach, almonds, beans, and oats.