

# Managing Everyday Stress

Stress levels among Americans are higher than the world average, and the World Health Organization (WHO) has classified stress as one of the major health epidemics of the 21st century. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported that stress has reduced our life expectancy to the lowest level in decades. But, don't worry, there is hope! The good news is that we can manage and minimize stress if we want to.

Everyday stress management tips:

1. **Self-Care** – Start with self-care. Make sure you are dedicating at least 15 minutes per day (hopefully a lot more time) to practicing self-care strategies. Try to align this time with the following categories: exercise, nutritious eating, sleep, social contact, relaxation, spiritual fitness, and enjoyable activities. Bring more balance to your schedule. If ignored, burnout will likely follow.
2. **Relaxation** – Begin a relaxation routine. Whether it be diaphragmatic breathing, guided meditation, or a mindfulness practice, find ways to activate your body's parasympathetic response of the autonomic nervous system. This is what gives us the feeling of relaxation and tranquility.
3. **Thinking** – Recognize the power of your thoughts. Thinking and feeling are intertwined and cannot be separated. The way you think can either positively or negatively affect your mood. Persistent negative thinking over time can lead to poor mental health. Identify these negative thoughts and realistically challenge them.
4. **Manage your energy** – Most people manage time. Few manage energy! Those who manage energy, do better at reducing stress. To manage energy, you must practice oscillation. This means for every 60-90 minutes of sustained engagement, take a 15-30 minute break. People who manage energy are excellent at knowing when they need to decompress and what activities help them restore energy.
5. **Reduce/eliminate the stressor (if able)** – Improving the environment around you can help you feel more at ease. Get rid of the clutter in your home, make your bed, turn the lights on, open windows and blinds, and keep a tidy desk at work. Also, keep the stress at the location/event that caused it. When you leave that location/event, leave the stress behind.
6. **Re-evaluate your priorities** – This may be the most important tip of them all! Align your priorities in life with your actions. Make sure that your work-life is something that you enjoy and/or fits within your life's purpose and values. To get there, it may require a change!

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