

Improve Your Skills

Stress Management Tips

We all feel stress from time to time. Knowing how to manage your stress will help to keep you healthy and productive. Two main strategies for managing stress are:

- (1) generate calm or relaxed feelings to counteract the biological state of exhaustion or over-arousal and
- (2) change your appraisal of the stress-inducing situation to reduce negative emotions.

Following are some tips for using each strategy.

Generating Calm or Relaxed Feelings

1. Eat healthy and avoid too much caffeine.
2. Get enough high-quality sleep; take a nap if necessary.
3. Exercise.
4. Practice relaxation techniques including meditation. These are known to relax muscles and reduce adrenaline levels.
5. Develop affectionate relationships. Giving and getting hugs, petting a dog or cat, or having conversations with friends can all reduce feelings of stress.
6. Prioritize your to-do list. As Scarlett O'Hara says in the movie *Gone with the Wind*, "I can't think about that right now. If I do, I'll go crazy. I'll think about that tomorrow."
7. Learn to say "No," "Not now," and "I really can't"—no one can do everything!

Changing Your Appraisal of the Situation

1. Try to view crises or stressful events as opportunities. The Chinese character for crisis, *wei ji*, is made up of two component characters. One is the character for danger, and the other is

the character for opportunity. Framing a crisis as an opportunity decreases negative emotions and increases positive emotions, reducing stress.

2. Reframe the stressor. Casting the situation in a less stressful or threatening way can decrease negative emotions and stress. For example, the boss is not really trying to make your job difficult; he or she is just very busy and has deadlines to meet.
3. Try to find the silver lining. Your boss's moving up the deadline for that big report is challenging, but it gives you a chance to show your talent, and it will soon be done!