

## BEST WAYS TO REDUCE STRESS

If you wake up constantly tired and unable to face the day, then chances are you may need to seriously re-evaluate your lifestyle and workload. Stress is one of the leading contributors to heart ailments and strokes. Yet it often takes a serious situation to jolt us out of our daily grind and apathy.

Try the following steps to help ease back on a stressful lifestyle:

**PREPARE THE DAY BEFORE** – If you know you're going to have a busy day ahead of you, then it's best to start preparing for it the day before. Get your presentations together, pack the kids' lunches and make sure the clothes are ironed. Getting ready a day in advance saves time, and cuts back on the morning stress factor that a lot of us face as soon as the alarm clock goes off!

**GET UP EARLIER** – Set your clock 15-30 minutes ahead each day. Use your quiet morning time to handle any last minute preparations and go through your to do list. If you have nothing urgent on hand, this is an ideal time to get in some exercise or meditation. If a brisk morning jog is not for you, try some gentle yoga or Pilates or even simple stretches to get the energy flowing. Alternatively, set out a mat and practice some meditation or deep breathing exercises. The latter can be extremely useful in moments of stress or anxiety attacks. If mornings are not for you however, you may want to look at setting aside some quiet time in the evenings or before you go to bed.

**TACKLE THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM** – Stress can come from one particular situation, or may be a build up of a variety of problems. Try and see what's causing the stress in your life. Is it the workload? Office politics? Maybe there are some personal problems on the home front? A cluttered home which needs organizing? Once you've reached the root of the problem, it's much easier to find solutions for it.

**EXERCISE** – Find some time to fit in some daily aerobic activity. Even 20 minutes of exercise thrice a week, will go a long way in helping reduce stress, not to mention toning your body and improving your health and general wellbeing. Exercising with a partner will keep you committed, and increase the fun as you go along. If you can't fit in structured exercise like visits to the gym, then think of upping your normal activity- walk instead of driving to the restaurant, climb the stairs instead of taking the elevator. Even small daily increments help in the long run.

**SIP ON HERBAL TEA**– Instead of brewing your usual cup of coffee, try to sip on some herbal tea. Herbal teas are known for their calming and relaxing properties. There is a wide variety to try from, right from the traditional camomile and mint, to more modern mixes with fruity flavours. Pick one that suits your palate and sweeten it with honey if you like.

**SURROUND YOURSELF WITH POSITIVE PEOPLE**- Positive people means positive energy. If you find your friends are constantly dragging you down, then it may be time to take a break and seek out more positive friends. The same holds true with your office colleagues. While it may not always be suitable to find a new job, you can try and ignore their negativity and focus on the positive side of your job.

**REFLECT ON WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT YOU HAVE-** That's probably the best advice on offer. Take time out each day to be thankful for what you have and what you've achieved. Constantly re-evaluate what's important in your life, and you'll find that it's probably your family and friends. Then, see if stressing about your promotion or not being able to afford the \$200 outfit is worth it. Most likely, the answer will be that it's not. Enjoying who you are and what you have will not only reduce the stress in your daily life, but will in fact, give your life a whole new meaning.

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