

ALL STRESSED UP AND NOWHERE TO GO

Most of us see stress as unavoidable, as part of being an employee, parent, student; as part of being human. Stress plays an important role in keeping us aware of our surroundings and able to react to change. Your body is equipped to deal with normal amounts of stress; however, when you experience prolonged states of stress, it can have a negative impact on your mental and physical health. Studies have found that almost half of all adults suffer from stress-related health issues. Unrelieved stress can contribute to headaches, high blood pressure, fatigue, depression, chest pain, heart disease, obesity, and diabetes.

So relax! There are many activities and techniques that can help you manage your stress and keep it at a healthy level. Try some of these tips to help you de-stress wherever you are.

Walk it off: Taking a walk can help lower stress hormones by increasing your endorphins. Even walking for 10 minutes can help you shed stress. If you can, stroll through a park, as natural sunlight boosts your mood, and nature has been shown to help reduce stress and allow for relaxed reflection.

Take a deep breath: Deep breathing tricks your body into feeling like it is relaxed and increases your oxygen levels, helping you shed tension and stress.

Give yourself a break: Take some time away from your phone and computer. Research has shown that continuous computer usage has been linked to depression, loss of sleep, and high levels of stress in women. Give yourself several breaks from your computer during the day, and try to turn it off at least an hour before you go to bed. Unsurprisingly, studies have shown that cell phones (especially smart phones) increase stress as you feel pressured to answer every call, text, and email.

Don't be so hard on yourself: Negative thoughts in reaction to a stressor can actually increase stress, but thinking positively can help calm you down and get you through each challenge. Instead of telling yourself that a task is impossible, try thinking that you will do the best you can or that you can get through it by taking the task one step at a time.

Grab a snack: Feeling hungry puts stress on the brain, so try taking a few minutes for a small, healthy snack – like nuts or a piece of fruit – to fill you up and help you de-stress without overeating.

Create a green space: Buying plants for your house or desk can help keep you calm. Research has shown that just being around plants can help lower blood pressure and help you relax. Many plants, like aloe, are also incredible air purifiers and can help filter many toxins from the air in your home or workplace.

Just stop and listen: Listening to music you love immediately boosts your dopamine levels, giving you an instant pick-me-up. Classical music is particularly relaxing; it has been proven to lessen stress hormone levels and lower blood pressure and heart rates.

Get creative: The repetitive motions involved in several crafts, like knitting and jewelry making, can be soothing and help you get rid of stress. Taking time for any creative activities you enjoy can help you relax and get your mind away from your stressors.

You can increase your resistance to stress by improving your physical health. Make an appointment with your healthcare provider to discuss your overall health and well-being. The better you feel, the more equipped you will be to handle life's curveballs.

WHAT PERCENTAGE OF DOCTOR VISITS ARE RELATED TO STRESS?

- A. 10-25 percent
- B. 40-50 percent
- C. 75-90 percent

Check your answer at the bottom.



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Answer: C — The American Institute of Stress states that stress causes adverse health effects in 43 percent of adults and that 75 to 90 percent of visits to the doctor are related to stress. When left unchecked, stress can cause serious health problems.