

# 5 STEPS TO A STRESS-FREE LIFE



# Introduction

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Stress is something that almost all adults experience. In fact, studies show that over half of Americans feel stressed during the day. Even more worrisome, studies show that stress causes 66% of sleep deprivation in America and 120,000 deaths in the workplace every year.

With those shocking facts in mind, it is imperative to learn how to manage your stress. For your convenience, we have created this short report on living a stress-free life. Using these 5 tips, you will feel your stress disappear, allowing you to lead your life happily and healthily.

## Simplify Your Schedule

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Many people experience stress because they have committed themselves to too many tasks and responsibilities. As a result, their hectic schedule is the main cause of their stress. If this is the case for you, the best way to live a stress-free life is to simplify your schedule.

You can determine if your schedule contributes to your stress by looking at your calendar. Do you have several, unrelated responsibilities? Are there any tasks that you don't want or need to do? Can your responsibilities be easily managed by another person? If you said "yes," to these questions, then you should think about simplifying your schedule.

You can simplify your schedule by looking at all of your responsibilities and evaluating their importance in your everyday life. Their importance can be classified as financial, personal, or professional. As you evaluate your responsibilities, you should find that some of them contribute to your stress without contributing to your financial, personal, or professional growth.

Consider letting go of responsibilities that make you feel stressed without providing you opportunities to grow. The reason for this is that these types of responsibilities simply make your schedule more hectic without benefiting your life and your future.

At first, you may find it difficult to let go of responsibilities, especially if they involve telling another person "no." Though this feeling is normal and natural,

it is important to fight against it and remove unnecessary tasks from your schedule.

# Meditate

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Another great tip for living a stress-free life is to incorporate daily meditation into your routine. Though many people think that they are too busy for meditation, anyone, from a teenager to a busy CEO, can find the time to meditate and experience all its benefits.

One of the greatest benefits of meditation is that it allows you to healthily relieve and manage stress. It is especially helpful for managing chronic or long-term stress. In fact, many studies have been conducted on meditation and stress and proven that meditation effectively treats it.

When you experience stress, your body releases cortisol and cytokines. This is called your body's stress response. Cortisol and cytokines better prepare you to act in dangerous situations, but they lead to sleep disruption, depression, anxiety, increased blood pressure, and cloudy thinking when they are released long term.

Interestingly, cortisol and cytokines decrease when you meditate. As a result, meditation reverses your body's stress response and instead triggers your body's relaxation response. During the relaxation response, your body's blood pressure decreases, muscles release their tension, and your body normalizes as a whole.

To combat chronic stress, you should practice meditation regularly. Regular meditation will give your body a chance to normalize every single day. If you only meditate sporadically, your body will not consistently be brought back to its normal and relaxed state.

As a result, you will experience less pain, an increase in energy, a more positive mood, and a decrease in anxiety, fear and anger.

To create a daily meditation practice, decide on and commit to a daily time to meditate. You may also want to create a meditation space that is only used for meditation. From there, hold yourself accountable to meditating at that time every day, even if only for 5-minutes a day.

Here is an example of a quick, daily meditation for you to try:

Find a quiet area to sit in. Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Begin to focus on your breath and try to slow it down. Aim to make the exhale longer than

the inhale. You begin by aiming to inhale for 4-seconds, holding for 5-seconds, and exhaling for 7-seconds.

# Get Moving

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Exercising is one of the best ways to keep your body and mind in check, but did you know that it also helps you relieve and manage stress? In fact, doctors list exercise as one of the best stress management tips. No matter what exercise you prefer, it will alleviate your stress and make you feel better as a whole.

There are two main reasons that exercise works so well as a stress reliever. Firstly, exercise makes endorphins pump throughout your body. Endorphins are a type of feel-good neurotransmitters that improve your mood; they make you feel more motivated and energized.

Endorphins counteract the feeling that you get from the cortisol and cytokines of stress. As more endorphins are released, the better you feel, which leads to a decrease in the release of cortisol and cytokines. In other words, endorphins caused by exercise replace cortisol and cytokines caused by stress.

Secondly, exercise is a form of movement meditation. Many people think that meditation means sitting quietly and stillly, but that is not always the case. Meditation can be connected with your movement when you are focused on how your body reacts and moves in the present. That is almost always what exercising entails.

The reason that movement meditation works is that it gives your brain a chance to forget about the problems and irritants of the day and focus on your movements instead. Additionally, it allows your body and mind to work as one, creating a more holistic and healthy perspective of the self. Exercising works in the same way. As you focus on your exercise or sporting event, your mind focuses away from your stress, allowing your stress to be relieved and managed.

Really any form of exercise will work. Just make sure that you do it on a regular basis. Many people find exercises that use large muscle groups in a rhythmic and repetitive fashion to be the most useful, which can be known as muscular meditation. This includes workouts like walking, running, or weight lifting.

Even a simple walk for 20-minutes a day can be helpful! The exercise will both reduce your stress and get your body in shape, which is always a perk!

# Be Creative

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One of the best ways to manage your stress is to get creative. Whether you love music, painting, writing, or any other creative activities, you can harness your interests to alleviate or manage stress.

The reason that creative outlets can help you manage your stress is that it allows you to take your mind off of things. Instead of contemplating your problems, you focus your mind on your artistic endeavors. Once you're done, you will have a clearer understanding of your situations and self.

Creative outlets also allow you to get into a near-meditative flow. Whenever you focus on the outlet, you experience what psychologists call a flow, which is similar to meditation and has all the same benefits.

Here is a look at how popular creative outlooks can help you live a stress-free life:

## **Music**

Music affects the mind and body greatly, and it is a fantastic way to relieve stress that you may be feeling. No matter what type of music you prefer, it will help you unwind and relax. Upbeat music can improve your mood and make you feel better, while slower music can relax you faster.

In fact, studies show that music affects brainwaves in a way that makes the listener more likely to relax and fall asleep. Music is so effective at this that some researches show that music is just as effective as medication for its calming purposes.

## **Draw or Paint**

Drawing and painting is another great creative outlet for living a stress-free life. It allows you to take your feelings and physically portray them in the form of abstraction. Portraying your feelings in such a way will allow you to better understand your feelings and view them as less intimidating.

You can take up drawing and painting no matter how good your artistic talents are. You will need paper and some utensils. If you are painting, you should consider watercolors because they will wash out easily.

## **Write**

If your stress is making it difficult to fall or stay asleep, one of the best ways to combat this is writing or journaling. Writing will allow you to get your thoughts and worries out, making it easier for your brain to relax before falling asleep.

You can keep a journal beside your bed. If you enjoy writing, you may want to have free-writes. Free-writes are when you write down what's in your head without any prompts.

You can also try prompted writings. Prompted writings can be in the form of a gratitude journal or self-reflected journal. This form of journaling is beneficial if you are new to writing and don't know where to start.

## **Other Hobbies**

If none of the previous outlets sound like you, there are plenty of other options you can choose from. Here are some ideas:

- Gardening
- Dream journaling
- Sculpting
- Knitting
- Baking
- Cooking
- Paper crafts

# Show Gratitude

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For many people, stress is experienced because they feel overwhelmed by the things that they have or don't have. Instead of focusing on their blessings and gifts, they fixate their minds on what they don't have, causing them to be overwhelmed by a never-ending cycle of want.

If this sounds like you, the only way you can stop this stress is by showing gratitude to yourself and others. Showing gratitude will give your brain a break and prevent you from needlessly trying to keep up with the Joneses. To show gratitude to yourself, start a gratitude journal. Every day, write three things you're grateful for in your life. Even if the things are small, they are still something to be thankful for.

In order to show gratitude to other people, you can write thank you cards to people or simply express your gratitude more often. Doing this will make your friends and loved ones feel appreciated while also making yourself feel better in the process.

## Final Thoughts

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Stress can be very harmful to our health, which is why it is important to know proper stress management techniques. Unfortunately, many adults feel overwhelmed by their stress and don't know how to begin managing it.

If this sounds like you, try simplifying your schedule, meditating, exercising, being creative, and showing gratitude. Though these techniques will not completely remove your stress, they will help you manage the stress so that you experience better physical and mental health.