

# 3 Techniques For Managing Your Stress



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WE ARE WELLBEING

## Stress Awareness And Three Techniques To Help Manage Stress

Stress is all around us and it's not something that we can truly eradicate in our lives because one stressor to one person is another's stimuli. Therefore, it is important to understand stress, and explore ways to take control and defuse it. High levels of stress has negative effects on our wellbeing, both physically and psychologically; stress can also be positive in certain circumstances, giving us drive and motivation.

When it comes to stress, it's how we handle it that counts, whether we interpret feeling stressed as a positive or a negative depends on many complex factors from our mental and emotional state to the quality of our professional lives. One thing about stress that is undeniably true is that we cannot ignore it. Stress is here to stay.

So it makes sense to explore practical ways to tame it, and turn it to our advantage and learn some techniques to help manage stress.

Once we learn how to manage stress effectively we can become more emotionally stable increasingly mentally sharp and productive, and in better physical shape.



This is because the way that we respond to stress has a profound effect on all aspects of our life and a successful approach to stress management has to be generated from a holistic perspective. How we manage stress depends strongly on our ability to adapt and welcome changing circumstances. What we need to do therefore is build up our emotional, mental and physical resilience and learn techniques to help us deal with stressful events as they arise.

### 1. Build Your Toolkit

Remaining focused in the face of stress and adversity is important but not easy. Stress-reduction techniques, such as guided imagery, breathing exercises, and mindfulness training, can help you regulate your emotions, thoughts, and behaviour and how you ultimately deal with stressful situations. Learning mindfulness techniques and other stress reduction techniques an adding them to a toolkit over time means that you can be more prepared when stressful moments come into your life.

One of the easiest ways to tap into mindfulness and being in the present moment as well as calming your central nervous system is through the power of our breath. Our best free asset and something we can tap into anywhere at any time. We often are not breathing as deeply as we should be and breath high up into the chest. By giving yourself a few moments to focus in on the breath, taking nice long deep breaths and focusing on the flow of the breath can be very calming whether in a stressful situation or not.

#### Try: The 3-1-6 breath

One quick breathing technique that you can practice over time and build up use of is breathing out for longer than you breathe in. This is important because when you exhale for longer than your inhale, the vagus nerve (running from the neck down through the diaphragm) sends a signal to your brain to turn up your parasympathetic nervous system and turn down your sympathetic nervous system. This is crucial when it comes to purposeful rest.

You can use this when in a difficult situation or when you find yourself in moments of stress, but you can also use it daily to build up a sense of resilience.

How to do it: Make sure you are in a quiet, comfortable space and if you want to close down the eyes. Take a nice deep breath to centre yourself.

Then breathe in for the count of three, hold your breath for one and breathe out for the count of six. Repeat this five times to really get into a calming relaxing space.

## 2. Emotion-Focused Coping Strategies

With emotion-focused coping strategies, like maintaining a sense of humour and cultivating optimism, the situation doesn't change, but your perception of it does. These strategies are great to use in situations where you have little ability to control what happens, and you need to see your stressors as a challenge instead of a threat. Other emotion-focused techniques for coping with stress include journaling about your emotions and practising self-compassion meditations.

By building up these coping skills you are building up your ability to be flexible and to adapt to situations – flexibility and adapting to changing situations which are beyond our control are essential to maintaining resilience.

### Try: The 3 minute stop

We often don't give ourselves opportunity to truly stop and focus on ourselves. There is always a meeting to go to, the to-do list to think about or family to be concerned with. Using the power of journaling allows you to refocus your attention on what is good about life. When we feel overwhelmed, we tend to be aware only of the negatives. The 3 minute stop journaling activity is perfect to weave into your day.

This is a really nice self care exercise to do at least once a week. Find a quiet place, and close your eyes. Allow yourself to focus on your self, your space with curiosity and compassion for three minutes (set a timer on your phone.

Let what's already there with you; your breath, your thoughts, your emotions, those things to do, any physical sensations pass you by. Rather than getting attached to thoughts, let them pass you by like clouds. Don't judge or reflect on them, just let them be.

After the three minutes, write down in your journal or on a pad of paper, the thoughts and feelings that passed through you and how you feel:

- What can you be grateful for?
- Where can you still find joy in your life?

We rarely have an opportunity to sit with ourselves and really take stock. It's a great way of checking in with yourself mentally.

## 3. Do What You Love

One of the best ways to reduce stress is to ignite positive energy and emotion instead.

Tapping into what you love changes the energy in your body, boosts your optimism and mood and can help reduce stress. Doing this regularly rather than as a once off can help keep stress levels in check.

This is about tapping into your "happy place" and finding pleasure in simple things. This might be reading a good book, cooking a new recipe, taking a walk in nature, meeting a friend for coffee or playing with your children or pets outdoors if possible.

These stress reducing techniques lean into the important things for our physiological and social needs as human beings, and being more mindful whilst doing these things is a great way to relieve stress. Even just tapping into your favourite things for 10 to 15 minutes regularly can help you deal with stress.

