

Seven Top Stress Tips

1. Identify and write down your major stressors

By taking time to find out what is causing you stress, you will be taking a big pro-active step towards managing your problem areas. Start by writing these down, no matter how trivial they may seem. Then, focus on the top 2 or 3 that cause you the most stress impact and work on a plan to deal with these one at a time. Never try to fix all the problems at once or in an unrealistic timescale. You should also now be able to let go of the trivial stressors as these are not so important.

2. Establish some goals and objectives

It can be very satisfying to set some personal goals and objectives to help you kick start the New Year. Make these meaningful and achievable as there is little point in setting personal goals that you either get bored with or you cannot accomplish. Make sure that you set your goals over short, medium and long term timescales to keep you fully focussed throughout 2010.

3. Develop a Personal Relaxation Plan

A relaxation programme can be as simple as deciding to walk more, to perhaps joining a gym. Even if you take exercise for just 20 minutes a day, this will help your physical and mental wellbeing. An often overlooked benefit of exercising is that our brains release endorphins, which have a “feel good” effect and gives us feelings of euphoria. If a more mundane relaxation programme is your choice of escape, try meditation, yoga or pilates – all of which will teach you a range of breathing exercises that are critical to relieving and beating stress.

4. Give yourself some thinking time

We all need some down time occasionally where we can think more clearly about circumstances and events that may be causing our stress levels to rise. Setting time aside to think about these problems will help you to rationalise what is occurring and provide some clarity to help you move forward. If this proves difficult, step outside yourself and look back in as an outsider. You may find this makes things easier as you are viewing the problems from the outside as a third party. Ask yourself “what would I do if I were advising someone else?”

5. Be positive

Many stress related problems can be made worse by low confidence and lack of self-esteem. When you are down and depressed, any issue, no matter how big or small, can have a negative effect on the way you feel. Having low self-esteem generally means that you have negative thoughts about the outcome of a particular situation, event or about yourself. Learn to convert any negative thoughts into positive thoughts and positive energy. Write down any problem areas and you will find that the whole situation becomes less threatening on paper. Change your thinking from “I can’t do” to “I will be able to do.”

6. Practice good time management

Time management isn't for everyone but even when you can apply some of the theory, you will see noticeable differences in the way you run your life and it will help you reduce stress. For example, making a list of your tasks at work is a great start but not very useful if you don't know how long each task will take, so remember to do this too. Also, prioritise tasks and ensure that you have a clear picture of what you will be doing today and each day of the working week – and stick to your plan!

7. Keep a Stress Diary

The Stress Diary is a fantastic way to keep track of what may be causing you stress and will help you identify any patterns that may be occurring. To make this a meaningful exercise, you should keep the diary for a minimum of 2 weeks as this will enable you to see any trends. Make a note of anything that causes you stress on a scale of 1-10 (10 being high) but only keep scores of 6 and above. Discard the rest as they should be minor stressors - you need to focus solely on the major stressors. You may find some of the findings surprising! Finally, work on a plan to eradicate the problem areas.

The Seven Top Stress Tips have been compiled by Ian Barratt, founder director of Mind Strengths Ltd. Ian is a qualified stress management consultant, author and speaker, who specialises in identifying and managing stress and improving wellbeing at both a corporate and individual level.

This article has appeared in the Dale Langley & Co Solicitors website blog in London www.dalelangley.co.uk and in the Corporate Wellness magazine in Florida www.corporatewellnessmagazine.com.

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