

Stressed Out? Four Ways to Beat It

After rolling over to look at the clock, you realize you overslept. Now you're late. It's out the door and on the freeway. Traffic is crawling. In the midst of bumper to bumper traffic you spill coffee in your lap. What an awful start to your day. By the time you walk in the door at work your neck and shoulders are tight and a headache is coming on. Stress...we all feel it. We know it's bad for us. In fact, stress has been linked to high blood pressure, heart attack, stroke, insomnia and headaches. Wouldn't it be great to have a "time out" button? Just like the Staples Easy Button on the commercials. Push the button and the world leaves you alone for ten minutes. What a great idea! But since that won't be happening any time soon, how can we handle stress? How can we take a bad day and turn it around? First, we need to realize that stress is not the circumstance we are in, but it is our body's response to the circumstance. That's why two people can both get cut off in traffic, one starts yelling and screaming and the other one is unfazed. Each person's body reacted differently. We can learn to change our reaction. When we feel ourselves getting stressed, instead of dwelling on it, try some of these ideas and see if you feel calmer.

Music - Music has a physiological effect. If you're stuck in traffic, turn on the radio or pop in a CD. I know this sounds quite simplistic, but I've used it and it works.

Quiet Time - An uninterrupted ten minutes works wonders. Turn off the phone. Get away from the computer. Make yourself inaccessible for those ten minutes. It's amazing how the stress can melt away when you know nobody is going to bother you.

Breathe - Long, slow, deep breaths help lower heart rate and adrenaline and cortisol levels. A few minutes of that creates a physical change that relaxes us.

Exercise - Don't forget the benefits of exercise. And it doesn't have to be intense exercise. A 15 minute walk can have powerful effect on our ability to handle stress. If your job is contributing to the stress in your life, try using your coffee break as a stress management tool. Use that time to take a walk. Not only will you see health benefits, you'll notice an increased ability to handle those stressful situations and you'll feel more inner calm. Stress doesn't have to get the better of us. We can make a conscious choice to react differently. Try it for yourself.

About the Author

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