

[IMAGE]

Less Stress in 3 Easy Steps

By Editorial Staff

Is your life dominated by stress? Between the on-the-job demands, away-from-the-job demands, technology advances that keep us perpetually engaged, and countless other diversions, we have less and less time to unwind these days. The result: Many people live in a constant state of stress, which can eventually lead to psychological and physical problems. The solution? It starts with finding easy ways to reduce stress on a daily basis. Here are three you can utilize today to get a few steps closer to a low-stress zone:

1. Turn It Off: Cellphones and the Internet have made us a 24-7 culture of communication and information overload. The obvious result is that we never have time to truly relax. These days, relaxation just means answering e-mail, posting on Facebook or scrolling through page after page on the Web. All of these activities not only don't give you time to relax and burn off stress; they can actually increase your stress levels. *The Solution:* Commit to specific periods of time during the day for answering e-mail and going on the Web. Since both activities are interconnected with the workday for many people, the best way to accomplish this is to commit to a "no-technology" time frame at night, perhaps from 7 p.m. or so and later. Take those few hours before bed to find ways to de-stress and relax without technology.

2. Talk It Out: Stress becomes a major problem, physically and psychologically, when it builds up. Stress needs a release or it grows and grows, taking over your life and occupying your every thought. In fact, some people who can't find a positive release for their stress "snap" and take it out on others, which can cause great damage to relationships, friendships and even careers. *The Solution:* One of the best ways to reduce stress is to talk about what's stressing you out. You can talk to a friend or loved one, or even an acquaintance if that's the only person in the vicinity. Talking about what's bothering you accomplishes two important things: It allows you to vent your frustrations instead of keeping them bottled up inside; and it opens the door for other perspectives, which might give you insight into how to reduce the stress-causing situations even more. Even taking a long walk or jog by yourself and talking to yourself about your stresses can be beneficial.

3. Tone It Down: When all else fails, there's no better stress buster than a little R & R - that's rest and relaxation, of course. The key is to not wait for that "big vacation" you keep planning but never find the

time to take. You can take a mental and physical vacation without buying a plane ticket or even leaving your house. It's all about making time to unwind; after all, you deserve it, particularly when so many areas of your life are so hectic. *The Solution:* Find 10 minutes at least three times a day to do something on *your* time – not anyone else's. Whether it's taking a walk, sitting in silence, or enjoying a calm, soothing bath / shower, give yourself the stress-free time your body and mind deserve, and they'll thank you for it by delivering you a lower-stress life. And when it comes to stress, low stress (or no stress) is what it's all about.

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