

# Stress-Reducing Tips

**1** *Get Organized!* Put things back where they belong and you won't go berserk looking for lost stuff. Allow extra time to get to meetings, finish projects, etc. If you are too hurried to be organized, it means you have too much on your plate. Cut obligations and activities in half and see if that allows you to get your act together. Organization is one of the main ways to reduce stress and surprises.

**2** *Live in the present.* Kids do this. For them, yesterday was a million years ago, and tomorrow is far, far ahead. Kids take each day as it comes. They do one thing at a time. When they're playing, they're just playing. They're not brooding about yesterday or fussing about tomorrow. Whatever they're occupied with, there they are. Their mind and body occupy the same space at the same time. Most of the time, adults' bodies are in the present space, but their minds are wandering around in the past or in the future. This split between body and mind is stressful.

**3** *Help others.* A lot of stress occurs when we get too wrapped up in ourselves. Small, everyday situations get blown up into earth-shattering events. One solution: look outside of yourself and help others. You'll get so involved in helping them that most of your own problems will vanish, or will start to seem insignificant. It's a cliché, but it's true - when you volunteer time to help a chemotherapy patient, your "bad hair days" start to look like a pretty minor problem.

**4** *Laugh.* If you can find humor in a problem, the problem is half-solved. Think of stand-up comedians. All they talk about are their problems! And they stand up tall and say whenever you're faced with something difficult, search for the humor in it. Laughter distances you from the problems so that you can get needed perspective.

**5** *Let other people do their own thing.* You are not the general manager of the universe, so relax. Things don't have to be done your way. Celebrate the different ways and different people. It would be very boring if the whole world did things only your way.

**10** *Remind yourself that other people and things can never make you angry.* Only your mind can do that. When something comes up, you can either choose to react stressfully, or you can choose to react in a calmly. Don't blame people or things for your stress.

**9** *Use different words.* Instead of calling something a *problem*, call it an *opportunity*. Instead of calling something a *deadline*, call it a *finish line*. Instead of calling something a *hassle*, call it a *challenge*. Renaming situations can relieve a lot of stress. See how many negative words you currently use to describe things, and take a new creative and positive approach.

**8** *Treat yourself right.* If you eat right, exercise, take time every day to be alone with your thoughts, and get enough sleep, you can cope with most everything that comes your way. We are least able to deal with life's surprises when our body is tired and unfit. If every little thing seems to be getting you down, it may be because you're not treating your body right.

**7** *Monitor the self-talk that goes on in your head.* The things you tell yourself in your mind create your stress. Whenever your mind starts running away like an unbridled horse, shout, "Stop!" Then turn it around and start thinking in a positive way. Instead of thinking, "That idiot driver! Where did he learn to drive? If I were a cop, I'd..." think, "Everyone is allowed to act like a complete fool once a day -and it's this guy's turn."

**6** *Give people a break.* Other people have bad days too. When you see someone doing something weird or annoying simply tell yourself he's having a bad day. Instead of condemning him, see if you can help him. Every one of us - without exception - has days when we need the people around us to be especially patient and tolerant.

