

## Tips for Reducing Stress in Your Life

The National Mental Health Association offers the following tips for reducing or controlling stress:

**Be realistic.** Don't take on everything; learn to say no. Set realistic goals for yourself. If you are feeling overwhelmed, try eliminating an activity that is not absolutely necessary. Ask yourself, "What really needs to be done? Is the deadline realistic?" No one is perfect, so do not expect perfection from yourself or others. And ask for help if you need it.

**Meditate.** It only takes about 10–20 minutes to get a benefit from meditating. These few moments of quiet reflection may bring relief from stress as well as increase your tolerance to it. And it is simple to do: sit quietly, listen to peaceful music, relax, and try and think of pleasant things or think of nothing.

**Visualize.** Take a moment to picture how you can manage a stressful situation more calmly and successfully. This can work with just about anything, whether it is an important presentation at work or moving to a new place or taking an exam. A visual rehearsal can boost self-confidence and help you have a more positive attitude toward a difficult task.

**Take one thing at a time.** When you start to feel overwhelmed, try taking one task at a time. Make a list of things you need to do. Put the most urgent task at the top. Once you have accomplished it, cross it off and move on to the next one. The positive feeling of crossing things off can help keep you motivated.

**Exercise.** Regular exercise is a great way to reduce stress, and it benefits the body as well as the mind. Just 20–30 minutes of physical activity a day can do the trick.

**Get involved in hobbies.** Take a break from the stressors of life and do something you really enjoy. Try gardening, painting, or reading. Schedule time to indulge your interests.

**Practice a healthful lifestyle.** Eating healthfully will make a difference. Avoiding things like smoking, excessive alcohol, and caffeine will help as well. Make sure you get adequate rest and exercise, and that you balance work and play.

**Share your feelings.** Talking about things can help you feel better. A conversation with someone can help you relax. And listening to someone else can take the focus off of yourself—something we all need to do every now and then. Stay in touch with your family and friends; don't try to cope alone.

**Give in occasionally.** You don't always have to be right. Be flexible. Be willing to compromise. If you do, others may meet you halfway. If you know you are right, stand your ground. But be calm and rational. Listen and make allowances for other's opinions.

**Go easy with criticism.** When you expect too much from yourself or others, you may end up feeling frustrated, let down, and disappointed. Remember that each person is unique and everyone, including yourself, has shortcomings. But each person also has many beautiful qualities to share with the world.



## SMART Goals

Three decades of research has shown that setting goals changes behavior better than simple messages to just do your best. Good goals are **SMART**:

- **S**imple
- **M**easurable
- **A**ttainable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**ime-defined

Improving a regular habit like the foods you eat or the amount you exercise can be overwhelming. But setting a goal so you know what you want to accomplish will significantly improve your chances of making healthy changes last. A good goal is reasonable and realistic. It's also wise to put a time frame on your goal—trying a change for 2 weeks is easier than telling yourself it's forever. But succeeding at a goal for 2 weeks is long enough to set down the beginnings of a healthy habit.

*Smartness runs in my family. When I went to school I was so smart my teacher was in my class for five years.*

—Gracie Allen



## Facts for Parents

**A family commitment to a clean, sober and free lifestyle will help turn youthful potential into youthful reality.**

Ask anyone! The adolescent years are challenging times for every family member. As a parent, you may be concerned about the attitudes and behaviors you see in your teen. Does anyone who begins to use drugs set out to become addicted? What is the difference between normal teenage self-expression and autonomy, versus real trouble or danger?

The fact is young people are being exposed to alcohol, nicotine, and illicit drugs before they enter adolescence. The younger someone starts to use alcohol or drugs, the more likely he or she will develop serious family, school, work, or physical problems later in their life. Addiction is a disease characterized by compulsive drug-seeking behaviors, regardless of the consequences.

- Few youth see the harm in using drugs. Yet, understanding the harms associated with drug use is one of the greatest deterrents to drug use by youth.
- Young people report that getting alcohol, tobacco and drugs is very easy.
- Young people who use alcohol and drugs are more likely to be the victims or the aggressors in an incidence of violence, engage in unplanned and unprotected sex, experience school failure, be seriously injured in vehicle accidents, or be involved in other risky and harmful behaviors while impaired.
- There was an expansion of the drug use epidemic from the 1960's into the late 1970's, a subsequent downturn through 1991, and a resurgence in use since 1991.
- Over the past 3 years, annual use of marijuana doubled among 8th graders, grew two-thirds among 10th graders, and increased by two-fifths among 12th graders.
- Club drugs such as MDMA (Ecstasy), GHB, Rohypnol, ketamine, methamphetamine, and LSD are quickly gaining popularity among young people. The drugs have been shown to cause serious health problems and, in some cases, premature death. **—THUNDER ROAD**

### *Be sure you know the facts about:*

**Addiction Disease Concept**

**Alcohol**

**Treatment Options**

**Steps**

**Marijuana & Other Drugs**

**Nicotine**

**Family Disease Concept**

**Tough Love**

**Communications**

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