

## Calm Down! Stress Management Techniques

Any doctor will tell you stress is a killer. As with any human vulnerability, there are companies out there trying to turn a buck by providing toys, massages, how-to books, and seminars to help us lower our stress levels. Personally, I find it all quite stressful, having to choose between a squeeze ball and the strong, penetrating hands of a masseuse. Therefore, with Tudog's blessings, I set out to discover ways I can reduce stress without having to deal with the tension associated with giving someone else the only benefit of my stress – my money.

I must confess that in addition to health concerns, I have been told by those close to me, including some whose opinions I trust and perhaps even value, that when I am stressed out, I am a bit unpleasant to be around. Personally, I don't see it, but I suppose even my own mother can't be completely wrong.

The thing about stress management techniques is that they are only effective if they are easy to do. While most of us know the dangers of stress, we don't really have the time to take breaks from our busy schedules to deal with it. If we were to take the time, we would fall behind on our work, which would, of course, be very stressful. So in my search for the master stress reduction techniques, I looked only for those I knew I could, and maybe even would, actually do.

I came up with 8 techniques that I have begun to practice, and with the exception of my mother, almost everyone is telling me how relaxed and calm I seem. The 8 techniques are:

**1. Stay Away from Stressful People** – like the flu or a rare tropical disease, stress is contagious. When you are with someone who is stressed out, the tension is thick and you cannot help but feel it. Moreover, stressed people typically do not like to be tense alone, and so they do and say things designed to cause stress in those around them. The best thing you can do is remove yourself from the stressful situation, perhaps later on, once the tension has lifted, going back to explain to the person who was stressed why you left and what they might do to lessen their stress (thereby lessening the stress of everyone around them).

**2. Breathe Deep** – keeping in mind there is a difference between heavy breathing for stress control purposes and obscene breathing that can lead you into a sexual harassment lawsuit, the use of breathing exercises to reduce stress is physiologically proven. Breathing slowly and heavily can slow down your heart rate and counter the harmful physical effects of the stress.

**3. Understand What Causes You Stress** – knowing what causes you stress is a huge advantage in your quest to reduce it. Sometimes there are certain circumstances that cause greater amounts of stress than when you engage in the same activity under other conditions. So too is it true about people. Some people cause you more stress than others. Also, there can be environments such as the office or holiday gatherings that cause stress, and there can be products such as coffee or candy that get you stressed. By knowing your stress triggers you are able to avoid or contain them, thereby reducing your stress.

**4. Follow the Calm Person** – in all kinds of stressful situations there is always one person who seems as calm as can be. Your initial thought could be that he/she simply

does not understand the gravity and urgency of the situation. Then you might think that he/she knows something you don't, making them understand things aren't as bad as you're imagining. Finally you simply come to understand that this individual just doesn't let the stress get to him/her. This is the person you need to follow. Not in the sense of walk around after them, but in the sense of allowing their calm demeanor to affect yours, making you calmer – and in the end more effective.

5. **Stop the Stress** – whenever you feel that stress ball developing in the pit of your stomach and you come to the point when you know your blood pressure is hitting the edges of cardiac arrest, stop the stress by disengaging, at least for a short while, from the process that is causing the stress. There is no reason, whether it be deadline or a boss breathing down your neck, that you need to literally get sick. Stop the stress, and then go back to what you were doing.

6. **Slow Down** – there is no way you can eat only fast food consider 5 hours a full night's rest, and count a slow jog to the refrigerator as exercise and not have both your body and mind revolt against you. Stress comes from all the hectic ways we live catching up with us. Slow down – eat right, sleep well, and exercise, and you'll find yourself calm and relaxed.

7. **Laugh** – let's face it; life is funny. Sometimes it is funny in an odd sense and sometimes the humor just sneaks up on you. In most cases a good laugh will drain all the stress right out of you. So not only do you need to lighten up a bit, but you also need to look for the humor in situations that seem not very funny at all. You'll find, even if you have to really dig deep down, that somewhere in the mess you're in is something to laugh about.

8. **Embrace Stress** – as strange as it may sound some levels of stress may actually help you perform. Sort of like adrenaline, stress can raise your awareness and push you to do things that you might normally not be able to do. As long as the level is just enough to motivate you, but not enough to hurt you, stress can be an ally.

The irony of stress is that when it exceeds a certain level it reduces performance, making us less good at what we do, thereby increasing our stress because we are not completing what we need to get done. When we are so worried or under tremendous pressure that all we are thinking about is the pressure, it is bad for our health, and our business. Like all things, stress, when taken in excess can be harmful and make you, so the people close to me claim, unpleasant to be around. Reduce the stress and you will not only be more successful, but perhaps even more popular. The very thought of it causes me stress...