



# TEN QUICK TIPS

- 1 **Make a list.** Whenever you feel overwhelmed, make a complete list of everything you have to do. You'll be surprised how therapeutic this process of organizing your life can be.
- 2 **Shower at the end of the day.** It will save you time in the morning, and you can enjoy it more at night.
- 3 **Talk with friends.** Don't underestimate the power of social support. Your network of friends may be the most powerful stress management tool you have at your disposal.
- 4 **Meditate over insomnia.** When you wake up in the middle of the night tossing and turning, why not use this time to practice meditation? It may put you right back to sleep.
- 5 **Skip the 11 o'clock news.** Most news overemphasizes murder and disaster. These shows are unnecessarily stressful.
- 6 **Get organized.** Disorganization is stressful. Celebrate organization day. Set aside one day a month to do nothing but organize your life.
- 7 **Arrive early.** When you're always running late you experience an enormous amount of unnecessary stress. Try to arrive at least a few minutes early and you eliminate this source of anxiety.
- 8 **Delegate with training.** Taking the time to teach people how to help you is worth every minute.
- 9 **If you know you're 51% wrong, apologize.** Carrying a grudge is stressful. Apologize!
- 10 **Only worry about work when you're there.** Don't bring your problems past your front door.



PRODUCED BY AUDIOVISION 1-800-367-1604  
FOR MORE INFORMATION ON STRESS :  
WWW.STRESSSTOP.COM



## information guides

# Practical STRESS Management

Ten time saving tips for turning off tension.



## What you need to know...

The market is down again! What an idiot I was to buy that stock last week. I *always* pick the wrong time for everything!



Most people believe that stress is the result of events and circumstances they can't control such as a traffic jam, a flat tire, or a nasty boss. But it is your *thoughts* about these people, events, and circumstances (which you *can* control) that is the *true source of your stress.*

**Have you ever noticed how your mind works during a stressful event?** Stuck in a traffic jam you might say to yourself: "This is just *awful*. My client will be furious if I'm late. I'm such an idiot for not leaving earlier." Upon discovering a flat tire on your way to work you might hear yourself

saying: "This is the worst possible thing that could have happened. I was already running late and now I'll *never* get to work on time." Or when your boss asks you to stay late, you might say to yourself: "That jerk. He's *always* doing this to me. He *never* asks anyone else to stay late. *It's not fair!*" Psychologists call this kind of thinking: *negative self-talk.*

**Most people aren't aware of their self-talk.** We are so busy blaming the event that *triggered* our reaction we don't see how our distress could possibly be the result of our

*thoughts about the event.* For example, let's say the office copier happens to break down in the middle of an important project you are working on. Without even being aware of it, you say to yourself: "This copier is *always* breaking down at the *worst* possible times. It *never* works right."

**Distorted thoughts like these are *not true* and only serve to upset you.** The truth is: The copier works right *most* of the time. But for some reason, in these situations, our minds tend to exaggerate the severity of the problem - thus making us even more upset. What's more, these *irrational* thoughts impair your problem solving ability. So as a result, you forget that the fax machine (which is only five feet away) can make enough copies to get you by in a pinch. (Remember, your problem-solving ability is one of your most important weapons against stress.)

**What you'll learn.** In this Easy-1 guide we'll show you how to identify the kind of muddled thinking that causes stress. We'll also introduce you to ten time-saving techniques - you can use any place and any time - to eliminate stress where it really starts: *in your own mind.*

It's not my fault. The copier broke down just as I was getting my report ready. That stupid thing is *always* breaking down. Nothing works right around here.



# What you might ask...

**It's hard to believe that stress is the result of my thoughts and not the result of the stressful things that happen to me. Are there any events which are considered universally stressful?**

There are many events, such as getting fired or experiencing the death of a loved one, that *most* people *agree are* stressful - but even here opinions vary. For example, cultural, religious and personal beliefs can greatly modify a person's level of grief. And many entrepreneurs fondly recall the day they got fired as "the best thing that ever happened to them." Whether it's a run in your stocking or a run on the bank your beliefs will largely influence (if not completely control) your experience of stress.

**I never think about my beliefs when I'm stuck in a traffic jam. I just get upset.**

That's true. Your reactions often seem *automatic*. That's because your beliefs about a traffic jam are formed long before you get there. You may be imitating beliefs that were modeled for you by your parents. These beliefs result in *learned* behaviors that kick in the moment you encounter a stressor (or cause of stress). For example, when you see a long line of brake lights ahead of you - you get upset. When beliefs and behavior patterns such as these are habitualized, they are harder, but not impossible to change.

**How can I short-circuit these stressful thoughts and behavior patterns that seem to occur automatically?**

It isn't easy but you *can* do it. First of all, your reaction to a stressful situation, such as a traffic jam, isn't really automatic. You have just gotten in the *habit* of reacting this way. So you must consciously break yourself of this habit by replacing old, overly negative thoughts with new, more objective thoughts. The second you start to feel your stressful thinking habits kick in *stop* and force yourself to rethink the situation: "I'm not going to let this traffic jam bother me. It's no big deal. I'll just call ahead and explain. They'll understand if I'm a little late. Next time I'll leave earlier."

**Why would I want to cause myself stress with my own thinking?**

You don't do it consciously. You do it without knowing. But once you become *conscious* of your negative self-talk, (in other words, what you say to yourself in stressful situations) you'll see how this internal dialogue is often inaccurate and untrue. These false statements not only make you upset, they prevent you from coming up with a solution to your problem: *Your muddled thinking causes you to believe that no simple solution to your problem exists.*

**Who developed this approach to managing stress?**

In the late 1950's two psychologists, Albert Ellis and Aaron Beck were working separately to develop an alternative to traditional Freudian psychoanalysis. Both these men believed that most of their patient's problems came about as the result of distorted thinking and NOT as the result of long forgotten childhood traumas. When applied to stress management, we call this form of therapy, *cognitive restructuring*.

**Cognitive Restructuring sounds a lot like positive thinking. Is there any difference?**

Yes there is a big difference. Cognitive restructuring doesn't require you to put a positive spin on *anything*. It simply asks that you *try* to see things *objectively*. For example, when you get a flat tire on a highway, it's not a happy moment, *but it's not the end of the world, either.*

After Max uses the computer the keys are always sticky. This used to drive me nuts. Now when things like this happen, instead of getting angry, I simply ask myself: How can I solve this problem? In this case, I keep a second keyboard just for me.



# What you can do...

Here are ten *practical* techniques that will help change the way you *think* about stress.

**1. Build in extra time.** Time pressure is the number one cause of stress. The next time you feel stressed about a broken fax machine, a traffic jam or the kids dawdling, chances are you'll find the *underlying* cause of your stress is time pressure. People constantly underestimate the amount of time an activity will take to complete. But when you build extra time into your schedule you compensate for this tendency.

**2. Expect stress.** We are often surprised by annoying events that really shouldn't come as any surprise at all. Traffic jams, getting disconnected, children that misbehave, car troubles, and spilled milk are all examples of situations that are fairly common, right? So why do we act so surprised and stressed when confronted by one of these situations? You must learn to recognize that a certain amount of stress goes with the territory you're in. If you own a car: *it will break down*. If you have kids: *they will misbehave*. If you drive on a highway, *you will get caught in traffic jams*. It's par for the course.

**3. Don't pass judgement.** This is an amazing piece of advice that can spare you an enormous amount of stress. When you decide that someone is being rude, or doing a poor job, or driving too slowly, or not minding his own business you'll be surprised how much these little judgements upset you. But when you positively refuse to pass judgement - you'll take a load off your shoulders you didn't even know you were carrying.

**4. Let go of anger.** When people upset you they usually don't *intend* to make you angry. They do it *unintentionally*. When you take this fact into consideration it's hard to get really angry with *anybody*. Here are two techniques that will help you foster a more accepting attitude: 1. Ask yourself: "Have I ever done something *similar* to someone else?" If you've ever interrupted someone, said an unkind thing, lost your

temper, talked at the movies, or *whatever* - forgive the person who just did this to you and *let your anger go*. 2. Always assume people had a good reason for doing what they did and talk it out on that basis. You'll be surprised how well these two techniques will help you dissipate your anger.

**5. The minute you encounter a problem start looking for a solution.** Sometimes we spend so much time wallowing in the fact that there *is* a problem we fail to see that there also *is* a solution. Your thinking gets stuck in the mud. By immediately asking yourself: "How can I solve this?" you free yourself from this trap.

**6. Avoid the blame game.** When you blame other people for the things that happen to you it only makes you feel worse. Why? Because you are subtly saying to yourself: "*I'm not in control of my own life.*" But when you take responsibility for the things that happen to you - *you feel more in control*. Next time you feel like blaming someone resist the urge and ask yourself: "What was my role in this and what can I do differently to prevent this situation from happening again?"

**7. Listen more; talk less.** Research shows that your blood pressure actually goes down a bit when you listen and it goes up a bit when you talk. Try to listen intently and see how relaxing it can be.

**8. Really focus on one thing at a time.** We think we're being efficient when we try to do two things at once, but in truth, we usually wind up doing two things poorly. If something is important to you - really focus on it.

**9. Take a couple of deep breaths.** It's a physical technique that's so quick and efficient - it's *practical*.

**10. Do something else.** When all else fails - do something else for a while. Switch gears. This technique works well for problems that pop up at the end of the day. Put them aside and tackle them the next morning when you're fresh.