

52 Proven Stress Reducers

1. **Get up 15 minutes earlier in the morning.** The inevitable morning mishaps will be less stressful.
2. **Prepare for the morning the evening before.** Make lunches, lay out the clothes you plan to wear.
3. **Don't rely on your memory.** Write down appointments and errands. ("The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory.")
4. **Do nothing which, after being done,** leads you to tell a lie.
5. **Make duplicates of all keys and label them.** Bury a house key in a secret spot in the garden; carry a duplicate car key in your wallet.
6. **Practice preventative maintenance.** Your car, appliances, home, and relationships will be less likely to break down or fall apart at the worst possible moment.
7. **Eliminate or restrict** the caffeine and sugar in your diet.
8. **Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today.** Whatever you want to do today, do it now. Procrastination is stressful.
9. **Plan ahead.** Don't let the gas tank get below one-quarter full; keep a well-stocked emergency shelf of home staples; don't wait until you're down to your last postage stamp to buy more.
10. **Don't put up with something that doesn't work right.** If your alarm clock, wallet, shoelaces, windshield wipers – whatever – are a constant aggravation, get them fixed or get new ones.
11. **Allow 15 minutes of extra time to get to appointments.** Arrive at the airport about one hour before domestic departures.
12. **Be prepared to wait.** A paperback can make a wait in line almost pleasant.
13. **Always set up contingency plans just in case.** "If for some reason either of us is delayed, here's what we'll do ..." kind of plan.
14. **Relax your standards.** The world will not end if the grass doesn't get mowed this weekend.
15. **Count your blessings.** For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 50 or 100 blessings.
16. **Ask questions.** Take a few moments to repeat directions, or what you think someone wants you to do. This can save hours.
17. **Say no to extra projects,** social activities, and invitations you know you don't have the time or energy for. This takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, every day needs quiet time to relax and be alone.
18. **Unplug your phone** if you want to take a bath, meditate, sleep, or read without interruption.

19. **Turn "needs" into preferences.** Our basic physical needs are food, water, and keeping dry and warm. Everything else is a preference. Don't get attached to preferences.
20. **Simplify, simplify, simplify.**
21. **Make friends with nonworriers.** Nothing can get you into the habit of worrying faster than associating with worriers.
22. **Take a refreshing bath or shower** to relieve tension.
23. **Wear earplugs.** If you need to find quiet, but Junior must practice the trombone, pop in some earplugs (available in any drugstore) – and smile.
24. **Get enough sleep.** If necessary, use an alarm clock to remind you to go to bed.
25. **Organize your home and workspace** so that you always know exactly where things are. Put things away where they belong; you won't have the stress of trying to locate misplaced items.
26. **Check your breathing throughout the day,** and before, during, and after high-pressure situations. If you find your stomach muscles are knotted and your breathing is shallow, relax all your muscles and take several deep, slow breaths. Note how – when you're relaxed – both your abdomen and chest expand when you breathe. When feeling stressed, most people breathe in short, shallow breaths. Stale air is not expelled, oxidation of the tissues is not complete, and muscle tension results.
27. **Write your thoughts and feelings down in a journal.** This will help you clarify things and give you a new perspective.
28. **Try the following yoga technique** whenever you feel the need to relax: Inhale deeply through your nose to the count of eight. Then with lips puckered, exhale very slowly through your mouth to the count of 16, or for as long as you can. Concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel the tension dissolve.
29. **Think "diversion".** When stress gets in the way of getting a job done, take a break. Refresh yourself with a change in activity and/or environment.
30. **Inoculate yourself against a feared event.** Just as a vaccine containing a virus can protect you from illness, if you expose yourself to one or more of the dreaded aspects of an experience beforehand, you'll probably feel less fearful. For example, before speaking in public, visualize every part of the experience in your mind. Imagine what you'll wear, what the audience will look like, how you will present your speech, and how you will answer questions.
31. **Get up and stretch now and then** if you have to sit for long periods in your job.
32. **Select an environment** (work, home, leisure) that matches your personal needs and desires. If you hate desk jobs, don't accept a job that requires you to sit at a desk all day. If you hate to talk politics, don't associate with people who love the subject.
33. **Learn to live** one day at a time.

34. **Every day**, do something you truly enjoy.
35. **Add an ounce of love** to everything you do.
36. **Talk it out.** Discussing your problems with a trusted friend can clear confusion.
37. **Do something** for somebody else.
38. **Focus on understanding** rather than on being understood, and loving rather than on being loved.
39. **Do something that will improve your appearance.** Looking better can help you feel better.
40. **Schedule a realistic day.** Allow plenty of "breathing time" between appointments.
41. **Eliminate destructive self-talk:** "I'm too old to ..."; "I'll never be able to"
42. **Be flexible.** Some things are worth not doing perfectly; some issues are best resolved with compromise.
43. **Use your weekend time for a change of pace.** If your work week is slow and patterned, make sure there is action and time for spontaneity built into your weekends. If your work week is fast-paced and full of people and deadlines, seek peace and solitude during your days off.
44. **Take care of today the best you can** – and the yesterdays and tomorrows will take care of themselves.
45. **Do one thing at a time.** When you're with someone, be with that person and with no one or nothing else. When you're busy with a project, concentrate on doing that project, and forget about everything else you have to do.
46. **Allow yourself time** – every day – for privacy, quiet, and thinking.
47. **If an unpleasant task faces you**, do it early in the day and get it over with.
48. **Learn to delegate** responsibility to others.
49. **Don't forget to take a lunch break.** Get away from your desk or work area in body and mind, even if it's just for 15 or 20 minutes.
50. **Forget about counting to 10.** Count to 100 before doing something or saying anything that could make matters worse.
51. **Have a forgiving view of things.** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world.
52. **Be optimistic.** Most people are doing the best they can.