

Ten Ways to Eliminate Stress

When we experience stress, it is because our thoughts are aligned with a potential consequence (in other words the absence of what we want to have happen) instead of the outcome which we desire. The problem is we live in a physical reality where we all create our own reality based on the thoughts that we are chronically thinking. And the emotions we feel (such as stress) are the indication of what types of experiences we are creating for ourselves in our lives. Here are 10 ways to eliminate stress from your life.

Sometimes it can seem as if there's nothing you can do about your stress level. When you are operating from your logical brain, the brain says things like... "The bills aren't going to stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day for all of the errands I need to run, and my career and family responsibilities must be done or calamity will strike".

Most of us become so acclimated to stress in our daily lives that stress becomes our second nature and we lose touch with what it is that causes stress. The answer is, what causes stress are the thoughts that we are thinking. When we experience stress, it is because our thoughts are aligned with a potential consequence (in other words the absence of what we want to have happen) instead of the outcome which we desire. We are operating out of fear.

It is easier to understand this difference when thinking about the example of two athletes. One athlete enjoys their sport and is confident in their own self worth. Therefore, when this athlete steps up to the starting line, their thoughts are aligned with winning and the fun of the race. The emotions flooding this athlete's system are ones of anticipation and excitement and enjoyment of their sport. But when the other athlete who may be struggling with self worth and lacking confidence steps up to the starting line, their thoughts are not aligned with "winning", instead their thoughts are aligned with "not loosing". The possibility of loosing and the consequences of such an outcome cause the emotions flooding this athlete's system to be those of stress and anxiety, and because of this they do not enjoy their sport like they normally would without the presence of stress.

The stress response floods your body with chemicals that prepare you for "fight or flight." In other words, it prepares you for consequences. The problem with stress is that we live in a physical reality where we all create our own reality based on the thoughts that we are chronically thinking. The emotions we feel (such as stress) are the indication of what types of experiences we are creating for ourselves in our lives. If you are mentally aligned with undesired results (trying to avoid them through effort and action) you will feel stress, and if the stress becomes chronic, you will inevitably end up creating the very undesired results you are aligned with (pushing against).

This is an attraction based universe. Meaning whatever you say "no" to, you are attracting into your experience and whatever you say "yes" to, you are attracting into your experience. You can not say "no" to a thing and not be holding that very thing you are saying "no" to as your primary focus. And whatever you focus on will come to be in the physical dimension.

The truth of the matter is that you have a lot more control than you might think. In fact, the simple realization that you're in control of your life and that you control your life with your thoughts is the foundation of stress management.

Managing stress is all about taking charge. Reducing stress is about taking charge of your thoughts (and subsequently your emotions), your schedule, your environment, and the way you deal with problems. You don't need to fear stress. You can instead learn how to recognize it within yourself, label it for what it is and see it as a beneficial red flag that has been raised in order to tell you that you are not living your life the way you want to live your life or deserve to live your life. Eliminating stress is about making the way you feel the priority of your life.

Here are 10 ways to help you eliminate stress in your life.

1. Identify your true sources of stress as well as the unhealthy coping strategies you may be using to avoid stress. Look closely at your habits, attitude, and excuses.

Do you define stress as an integral part of your work or home life by identifying with beliefs like "Things are always crazy around here", or as a part of your personality by aligning with beliefs like "I am just a naturally anxious person", or "I am just a worrier... that's all"? Do you have the habit of explaining away stress as temporary when it is not? Do you say things like "I just have a million things going on right now" (despite the fact that you can't remember the last time you took a breather)? Do you blame your stress on other people or outside events instead of recognizing the damaging beliefs or thought patterns which attract the people and events which increase your stress levels into your life? Do you view your stress as entirely normal and therefore unexceptional? Until you accept responsibility for the role you play in creating or maintaining stress, your stress level will remain outside your control.

Do you practice coping strategies which temporarily reduce stress but cause more damage in the long run? Such as:

- Smoking
- Drinking
- Overeating or under eating
- Trying to avoid stressors by spending hours in front of the TV or computer
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and activities
- Using pills or drugs to relax
- Escaping by sleeping too much
- Procrastinating
- Filling up every minute of the day with things to do so as to avoid facing problems Or
- Taking out your stress on others (lashing out, angry outbursts, physical violence)

It is very important when you are plotting your course to where you want to be in life, to first be honest with yourself about where you are currently. Realize that where you are is just where you are. There is nothing keeping you there but you. And recognize that you not only want your life to feel better but you are also committed to finding a way to feel better.

1. Change the way you are thinking.

How you think has a profound effect on your emotional and physical well-being. Each time you think a negative thought about yourself or your life, your body reacts as if it were in the throes of a tension-filled situation. If you think positive thoughts about yourself and your life, your body will

react by releasing chemicals that make you feel good. Work to eliminate words such as "always," "never," "should," and "must" from your vocabulary. These definitive statements are very conducive to thoughts which are self-defeating and create stress.

Don't try to control the uncontrollable. Many things in life are beyond our control (things like the behavior of other people for example). Rather than stressing out about the things you can't control, focus on the things that you can control. The only things we have real control over in our lives are our own thoughts. The more control we learn to have over our own thoughts, the more power we will have in our lives. Our thoughts are the one thing no one else can choose for us. The more power we feel that we have in life, the less stress we will feel. You can not feel free and relaxed when you continue to focus on things that make you feel powerless and that you can not control. So, learn to let go of them.

Reframe problems. Learn to think positively by practicing thinking thoughts about yourself and your life that feel better to you when you think them. Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. For example, rather than panicking about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favorite radio station, or enjoy some alone time. When stress is getting you down, take a moment to reflect on all the things you appreciate in your life, including your own positive qualities and gifts. This simple strategy can help you keep things in perspective.

Look at the big picture. Learn to view your stressful situation from a different perspective. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? Will it matter in a year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere. Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Perfection is a completely subjective concept. Perfection is in the eye of the beholder. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others. And learn to love yourself the way you are instead of basing your worthiness on what you present or produce in life.

Many of us are goal oriented. We see happiness as an end result, a destination we get to and then the journey stops. The truth is it never stops. You will never "get it all done". The process of living is one of continual evolution, when we achieve something we desire, we do not stop desiring. Instead, we desire something else. This is the way life was intended to be. So, the point of life is enjoying the process (every aspect of the process). Sometimes if you just accept that you will never get it all done and there will always be more you are reaching for, you can let yourself off the hook of trying to get everything finished right here and now as soon as you possibly can.

1. Figure out what makes you happy.

By the time many of us are dealing with stress, we are standing in adulthood surrounded by a life that has not been deliberately created. Instead, it has been created by default. This means that we have based our beliefs, goals and desires not off of what is true for us and what makes us happy, but instead off of what satisfies the beliefs and priorities of others (especially authority figures in our early life and society as a whole). Many of us have lost touch with what makes us happy. The risk of placing value on what makes you happy and who you really are often feels like the risk of not being loved for what is real about yourself. It can also feel like the risk of being seen as a failure by others (which is a threat to most people's sense of self worth) so it is easy to see how placing value

on what makes you truly happy can be a very frightening proposition. But until you reveal your true desires and what truly makes you happy, it is not possible to be truly happy.

If you have lost touch with what makes you happy, one of the best ways to get back in touch with it is to think back to your natural inclinations as a child. Make a long list of things you knew you loved when you were a child. Make a list of your natural talents as a child and try to remember what you wanted to be when you grew up. Now after you make that list, make sure to ask yourself why. Why did you love those things? Why did you possess those natural talents? Why did you want to grow up to be those things? Then ask yourself "do I still enjoy and practice these things?" If not...why? Can I remember what caused me to stop? Was it because of someone else? Do I remember how it felt to stop doing those things? And then, take a step forward by trying some of these things you once loved to do... again.

From here, fast forward. Ask yourself what your favorite part of your entire life was so far and why that particular point was your favorite part of your life. Get as detailed as you can in order to discover the true reason you enjoyed it so much. And after that, ask yourself what you enjoy about the life you are living in now? What am I passionate about in my life currently? Have I devoted those things to the back burner, or are they the primary focus of my life? This process will help you to understand what it is that you truly enjoy separate of your conditioned and logical brain, which (being mechanical in nature) has often been taught to minimize feeling states such as joy and passion.

Finding your own personal idea of happiness (which is very individual) is an incredibly important component to stress reduction, because vibrationally speaking, happiness is a state which is totally absent of stress.

1. Seek out tools which work for YOU to reduce stress.

There are many sources and products which exist worldwide whose sole purpose is to help you to reduce stress. So, seek them out! Begin by making a list of things which you can already identify that help you to reduce stress. When stress comes up, get in the habit of going to the list and picking something off of the list to do. Set out to learn and practice relaxation techniques. The relaxation response brings your system back into balance. It deepens your breathing, reducing stress hormones, slows down your heart rate and blood pressure, and relaxes your muscles.

In addition to its calming physical effects, research shows that the relaxation response also increases energy and focus, combats illness, relieves aches and pains, heightens problem-solving abilities, and boosts motivation and productivity. Relaxation techniques may include things such as Emotional Freedom Technique, deep breathing, visualization, progressive muscle relaxation, meditation, yoga, tai chi, massage, stretching or aromatherapy.

1. Make your physical health a priority.

The body is an incredibly reflective instrument. When the mind is thinking negative, stressful thoughts, those thoughts are reflected in the body. But it is also true that when the body is kept in a state of negativity and stress, that stress and negativity is reflected in the mind. So, it is very helpful to take control of your physical health.

Exercise Regularly. Exercise does not have to be a source of more stress. In fact it can be a great stress reducer if you can find an exercise that you enjoy doing (instead of simply exercising for the sake of exercise). Physical activity helps to increase the production of your brain's feel-good neurotransmitters, called endorphins. Endorphins are natural pain killers and they make you feel "happy". They are responsible for the well known "runner's high". Exercise forces tense muscles (through use), to release their state of tension. Exercise can also be like a meditation in motion. You'll often find that you've forgotten the day's irritations and concentrated purely on your body's movements when you are exercising. And it helps you release pent up stressful energy. As you begin to regularly shed your daily tensions through movement and physical activity, you may find that this focus on a single task, and the resulting energy and optimism, can help you remain calm and clear in everything that you do. Exercise also can improve your quality of sleep.

Eat healthy, well-balanced meals. You are what you eat. A nutritious diet can counteract the impact of stress by reinforcing the immune system and lowering blood pressure. Comfort foods (like mashed potatoes) have been shown to boost levels of serotonin, a calming brain chemical. Other foods can reduce levels of cortisol and adrenaline (stress hormones that take a toll on the body). Stressed people tend to gain weight, and make food choices that are not conducive to health. There is a lot of information available from experts on diets that specifically reduce stress, as well as many herbal supplements that have been shown to diminish stress. Go looking for them and try to implement the suggestions. You will be surprised by the results! It is important that you don't rely on sugar, caffeine, alcohol or other drugs to reduce stress. Relying on such things not only creates physical or mental dependency, it harms your body in the long run.

Get enough rest and sleep. Sleep deprivation is chronic in our culture. Sleep deprivation is one of the chief aggravators of stress. Lack of sleep increases levels of cortisol, a stress hormone. Sleep deprivation also affects the immune system (depleting certain cells needed to destroy viruses and cancerous cells), it promotes the growth of fat instead of muscle, and speeds up the aging process. Your body needs time to recover from stressful events. Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally. When you are tired, you are less patient and easily agitated, which can increase stress. And then, to make matters worse, you will not have the energy to deal with the stress. Most adults need 7-8 hours of sleep per night. Start to make sleep a priority. Start to see it as a necessity not a luxury.

1. Learn to manage your time more effectively.

In this physical dimension, we lead linear lives. No matter how skilled any of us may think we are at multi-tasking, when it comes to action, we can only be in one place at one time. What's more, we can only really do one task well in each moment. For the average man or woman, day to day life is a whirlwind of frantic activity. Life is composed of rushing from one task to another while still not really accomplishing anything of value at the end of the day. It is therefore very useful to learn to manage our time more effectively. Using time more effectively helps to eliminate stress by making order of chaos. It is very helpful to reduce stress by getting organized. No one can think clearly when they are surrounded in a physical environment which is chaotic. So begin by cleaning and organizing your environment.

A mental environment which is cluttered is conducive to stress and ineffective time management as well. One way to combat this kind of chaos is to learn how to write lists and then prioritize. Set

clear goals and break your goals down into discreet steps. To be effective, you need to decide what tasks are urgent and important and to focus on those. Devote the majority of your time to the most important tasks. Trying to remember everything in your head is a recipe for stress. When you do not have to worry about remembering everything (because it is written down), you will be more able to accomplish the things and also your stress levels will diminish. Writing lists helps you identify important objectives, helps you order your thoughts, helps you prioritize, helps you see the big picture, saves time, helps you feel in control, helps you track your progression, and makes you much less likely to forget to do things.

Identify areas of your life where you are wasting time and come up with a plan to reduce them. It may help to even enlist the help of others to help you stick to it. It may help some people to also develop a routine so they can know what to focus on when. One useful way to develop a routine and thereby eliminate wasted time is to use a time log. To do this, make up a chart for the next seven days divided into half hour intervals, starting the log at the time you get up and finish it at the time you go to bed. Write down what you do during each half hour of the day for the next seven days. Choose a typical week. At the end of the week examine your time log and ask yourself the following questions. Are there any periods that I could use more productively? At what time of day do I do my most effective work? (Some people are most alert in the morning, whilst others concentrate best during the afternoon or evening). Schedule your most important tasks for these times of day. Eliminate wasted time by replacing it with activities that are conducive to a more fulfilling, enjoyable and productive lifestyle.

1. Express your emotions

We currently live in a society that does not understand the value and role of emotions. We live in a society that also tends to promote repression instead of expression. But unexpressed emotions affect your life. Start to label your emotions. This will help you to identify them when they come up. Emotions are transient. They will dissipate as they are expressed. The only type of emotion that lingers is repressed emotion. If something or someone is bothering you, voice your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don't voice your feelings, not only will resentment build but the situation will likely remain the same.

You may want to use physical expression as a route to releasing emotions. Make sure you chose a physical activity that will not harm another person or yourself. Some good ways to express anger and stress include punching pillows, screaming into pillows, taking out a pen and paper and writing what you feel, painting or drawing what you feel, hitting the ground with a stick, popping balloons, taking a kickboxing class, going for a run or trying to get yourself to cry. It will feel good to get the tears flowing. It will surprise you how much better this will make you feel. The emotions will no longer be like a wall preventing you from moving forward if you express them in a healthy way.

1. Keep your life simple and learn how to say no.

Keeping life simple isn't always easy. Simplicity is especially hard to attain in this fast paced century that we are currently living in. We often lose track of why we are doing what we are doing. We go so fast and create such busy, complicated lives that we forget that we have control of our lives. Instead it feels like our lives are running us.

The human ego loves complexity because it measures worth in quantity instead of quality. It also bases itself off of comparison with others. Our ego relies on fear to protect itself, and complexity is a great place to hide. Simplicity therefore, requires dedication. Begin the quest towards simplicity by taking these steps.

- Ask yourself honestly what areas of your life you feel need to be simplified.
- Identify what is holding you back from simplifying them.
- Eliminate the clutter and unnecessary aspects of your life.
- Get rid of stuff you don't use.
- Stop trying to please everyone. Instead, simply do what you intuitively feel that you know is right.
- Finish one project before you start another.
- Dedicate more time to what is really important in your life.
- Don't buy stuff you don't need.
- Aim at living below your means. This does not mean you should live in an attitude of denying yourself what you desire. It simply means making decisions that ensure you will end up with excess and therefore be focusing on the feeling of abundance instead of lack. While it is perfectly fine to desire a life of wealth, as well as work on creating it in your life, there is almost nothing worse for adding to stress levels than living beyond your means. This will set up a dynamic of focusing on the amount of money you don't have.
- Consolidate everything you can find to consolidate.
- Permit yourself to enjoy the present moments of your life (the now).
- Know your limits and stick to them. In both your personal or professional life, refuse to accept added responsibilities, especially when you're close to reaching goals. Taking on more than you can handle instantly gives rise to stress.

Many of us fear saying no. We think that to say no is selfish. And we often feel as if saying yes is the only way to earn the love of others. But, love which must be earned is not real love. And it is not selfish to ensure our own happiness, because when we are happy and feeling stress free, we have the energy and resources to devote to others. When we are unhappy and feeling stressed, we often become ill and have no energy to devote to others anyway. When you say no to a new commitment that would add stress to your life, you're honoring your existing obligations and ensuring that you'll be able to devote quality time to them. Burying yourself in commitments ensures that you will begin to feel just that...buried. Saying no may not be the easiest thing to do. But sometimes it is the necessary ingredient for practicing self care as well as eliminating stress from your life.

1. Make time for fun and relaxation by finding healthy ways to relax and recharge, and give yourself permission to do so.

The sad fact about stress is that most people who experience stress have their priorities backwards. For example, someone may think that perfection is the most important thing in life or that responsibility is the most important thing in life. What they fail to recognize is the very reason for which they seek out perfection or responsibility. And the reason is this... they think they will feel better when they produce something which is perfect or when they are responsible than they would in the absence of perfection or responsibility. It is therefore important for those suffering from stress to realize that the sole reason for doing those things they "have to do" comes from the motivation of feeling better... in other words... happiness. This means that all people, most especially those who

suffer from stress, would do very well to cut to the chase and make the priority of their lives (their true motivation) how they feel. It is important for the highest priority in a person's life to be none other than... happiness. The things that each specific person finds enjoyable and relaxing varies but some ideas for healthy ways to relax and recharge include:

- Call a good friend
- Spend time outside
- Take a bath
- Sweat out tension with a good workout
- Write in a journal
- Savor a warm cup of tea
- Make yourself one of your comfort foods
- Spend time with a pet (pets have been shown to dramatically reduce stress)
- Get a massage
- Play a game
- Read a book
- Drive to a place with an amazing view
- Listen to music
- Watch a comedy movie
- Connect with others. Spend time with positive people who enhance your life. A strong support system will buffer you from the negative effects of stress.

One of the greatest ways to reduce stress in your life is to make sure that you do something you enjoy and that recharges your engine every day. It does not have to be done alone. In fact, these kinds of activities can be used to re charge the entire family.

1. Never underestimate the power of laughing. Seek out and create opportunities which will make you laugh.

It turns out that laughter may just be the best medicine of all. You have probably noticed that laughter is infectious. Laughter binds people together and increases happiness and intimacy. Humor lightens your burdens and inspires your hopes. Humor helps you to shift perspective and paints things in a less threatening light. It enhances resiliency and it also triggers healthy physical responses in the body. Laughter has been shown to strengthen the immune system. Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thereby improving your resistance to disease.

Like exercise, laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even relieve pain. Laughter has been shown to improve the function of blood vessels and increase blood flow which leads to improved heart health. In recent studies, it has also been shown that a good, hearty laugh leaves your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes. Laughter protects you from a plethora of damaging effects that stress can cause to the body and the mind. It is fun and it also does not cost anything.

So, when you are trying to eliminate stress from your life, try to indulge your laughter as much as you possibly can. Allow and seek out avenues for it to surface. You can even begin with a smile. Smiling is the beginning of laughter. It too is contagious. It too releases endorphins. Seek out ways

to develop your own sense of humor. Seek out that which is funny to you, whether it is renting a funny movie, calling up the friend who always makes you laugh or developing an arsenal of jokes to tell. As laughter becomes an integrated part of your life you will be taken to a mental space where you can view the world from a more relaxed, positive, and balanced perspective.

Many of us have the self defeating belief that everything that is worth having is hard won. But this belief ensures that we are going about life in the wrong way. We should approach things with much more ease. Doing things the hard way causes stress, and stress in actuality, keeps the desired results from you. If you are brave enough to make feeling good the primary priority of your life and then take the steps necessary to enable your own joy as well as reduce stress levels, you can find yourselves living the life that you want to live. A Life that feels good to be living and a life full of health and freedom and joy.