

52 Proven Stress Reducers

1. **Get up 15 minutes earlier in the morning.** Extra time helps make mishaps less stressful.
2. **Prepare for the morning the evening before.** Set the breakfast table. Make lunches. Put out the clothes you plan to wear.
3. **Don't rely on your memory.** Write down appointment times, such as when to pick up the laundry, when library books are due. ("The palest ink is better than the most retentive memory."—Chinese Proverb)
4. **Do nothing you have to lie about later.**
5. **Make copies of all keys.** Bury a house key in a secret spot in the garden. Carry a duplicate car key in your wallet, apart from your key ring.
6. **Practice preventive maintenance.** Your car, appliances, home, and relationships will be less likely to break down "at the worst possible moment."
7. **Be prepared to wait.** A paperback book or MP3 player can make waiting in a post office line almost pleasant.
8. **Procrastination is stressful.** Whatever you want to do tomorrow, do today; whatever you want to do today, do it now.
9. **Plan ahead.** Don't let the gas tank get below one-quarter full. Keep emergency supplies of home staples. Don't wait until you're down to your last bus token or postage stamp to buy more.
10. **Don't put up with something that doesn't work right.** If your alarm clock, wallet, shoe laces, windshield wipers—whatever—are a constant aggravation, get them fixed or buy new ones.
11. **Allow 15 minutes of extra time to get to appointments.** Plan to arrive at an airport at least one hour before domestic departures.
12. **Eliminate (or restrict) the amount of caffeine in your diet.**
13. **Set up contingency plans,** "just in case." ("If we get split up in the shopping center, let's meet here.")
14. **Relax your standards.** The world will not end if the grass doesn't get mowed this weekend.
15. **Use Pollyanna-Power!** For every one thing that goes wrong, there are probably 10 or 50 or 100 blessings. Count 'em!
16. **Be clear before you act.** Ask questions. Take a few moments to repeat back instructions given to you. Don't fall prey to the old "the hurrier I go, the behinder I get" idea.
17. **Say "No" to extra projects, invitations, and social activities you don't have time or energy for.** This takes practice, self-respect, and a belief that everyone, every day, needs quiet time to relax and to be alone.
18. **Turn off or unplug your phone.** Take a long bath, meditate, sleep, or read without interruption. Drum up the courage to temporarily disconnect. (The possibility of there being a terrible emergency in the next hour or so is almost nil.)
19. **Turn "needs" into preferences.** Our basic physical needs are food, water, and keeping warm. Everything else is a preference. Don't get attached to preferences.
20. **Simplify, simplify, simplify.**

21. **Make friends with non-worriers.** The behavior of chronic worrywarts is contagious.
22. **Take frequent stretch breaks** when you're sitting a lot.
23. **If you can't find quiet at home, wear earplugs.**
24. **Get enough sleep.** Set your alarm for bedtime.
25. **Organize!** A place for everything and everything in its place. Losing things is stressful.
26. **Monitor your body for stress signs.** If your stomach muscles are knotted and your breathing is shallow, relax your muscles and take some deep, slow breaths.
27. **Write down your thoughts and feelings.** It can help you clarify ideas and give you a renewed perspective.
28. **Do this yoga exercise** when you need to relax: Inhale through your nose to the count of eight. Pucker your lips and exhale slowly to the count of 16. Concentrate on the long sighing sound and feel the tension dissolve. Repeat 10 times.
29. **Visualize success** before any experience you fear. Take time to go over every part of the event in your mind. Imagine how great you will look, and how well you will present yourself.
30. **Take your mind off the task for a while.** If the stress of a deadline gets in the way of doing a job, use diversion. You will focus better when you return to it.
31. **Talk out your problems with a friend.** It helps to relieve confusion.
32. **Avoid people and places that don't fit your personal needs and desires.** If you dislike politics, don't spend time with politically excited people.
33. **Learn to live one day at a time.**
34. **Do something you really enjoy** every day.
35. **Add an ounce of love** to everything you do.
36. **Take a bath or shower** to relieve tension.
37. **Do a favor** for someone every day.
38. **Focus on understanding** rather than on being understood, on loving rather than on being loved.
39. **Look good to feel better.**
40. **Take more time between tasks to relax.** Schedule a realistic day.
41. **Be flexible.** Some things are not worth perfection.
42. **Stop negative self-talk:** "I'm too old." Make it positive: "I've learned from life."
43. **Change your pace on weekends.** If your week was slow, be active. If you felt nothing was accomplished during the week, do a weekend project.
44. **Pay attention to the details** in front of you. "Worry about the pennies, and the dollars will take care of themselves."
45. **Do one thing at a time.** When you are working on one thing, don't think about everything else you have to do.
46. **Allow time every day for privacy,** quiet, and thought.
47. **Do unpleasant tasks early** and enjoy the rest of the day.
48. **Delegate responsibility** to capable people.
49. **Take lunch breaks.** Get away from your work in body and in mind.
50. **Count to 1,000 (not 10),** before you say something that could make matters worse.
51. **Forgive people and events.** Accept that we live in an imperfect world.
52. **Have an optimistic view of the world.** Most people do the best they can.