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Stress Management: It's Techniques and Strategies to Deal with Stress Problems in Life Environment

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Abstract

According to the World Health Organization, stress is a significant problem of our times and affects both physical as well as the mental health of people. Stress is defined as a situation where the organism's homeostasis is threatened or the organism perceives a situation as threatening. Stress coping methods are the cognitive, behavioral and psychological efforts to deal with stress. Managing stress is all about taking charge: of your thoughts, emotions, schedule, environment, and the way you deal with problems. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun plus the ability to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on. But there's no one method-fits-all solution to stress management. After a thorough literature review in major databases the techniques were identified and are presented and briefly discussed here. Conclusion: These are all techniques, easy to learn and practice, with good results in individuals with good health. Remember managing stress is an ongoing journey, and open communication, self-care, and a strong support system are the pillars of a resilient, thriving family.

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Introduction

Managing stress is all about taking charge: of your thoughts, emotions, schedule, environment, and the way you deal with problems. The ultimate goal is a balanced life, with time for work, relationships, relaxation, and fun plus the ability to hold up under pressure and meet challenges head on. But there's no one method-fits-all solution to stress management. That's why it's important to experiment and find out what works best for you. Whether you're looking to reduce your overall stress levels, avoid unnecessary stressors in your life, or deal with stress in the moment.

Stress Management

Stress management involves using various techniques and coping strategies to manage your overall stress levels, improve how you react to stressful things in your life, and build resilience. It may seem like there's nothing you can do about stress, no way to avoid it and no way to de-stress completely when it hits. The bills won't stop coming, there will never be more hours in the day, and your work and

family responsibilities will always be demanding. But the truth is, you have a lot more control over stress than you may think. In fact, the simple realization that you're in control of your life is the foundation of stress management.

Identify the Causes of Stress in your Life

Stress management starts with identifying the sources of stress in your life. This isn't as straightforward as it sounds. While it's easy to identify major stressors such as changing jobs, moving, or going through a divorce, pinpointing the sources of chronic stress can be more complicated. It's all too easy to overlook how your own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors contribute to your everyday stress levels. Sure, you may know that you're constantly worried about work deadlines, but maybe it's your procrastination, rather than the actual job demands, that is causing the stress.

Stress Management Techniques and Strategies

While it may seem like there's nothing you can do about stress in your life, there are healthy steps you can take to destress and regain control. In today's fast-paced world, stress

has become an inevitable part of our lives, particularly for busy families. Work, school, extracurricular activities, and household responsibilities can all contribute to this stress, making it crucial to find effective ways to cope. To help your family maintain a balanced and healthy lifestyle, we've compiled what we believe are the best stress-reducing techniques for busy families, designed to cater to everyone from stressed parents to teenagers feeling the pressure. Here are our top strategies to navigate the challenges of a busy life, mitigate stress, and promote overall well-being.

1. **Prioritize Self-Care:** Schedule regular self-care activities for every family member, such as reading, exercising, or taking a relaxing bath. Encourage each other to set aside time for hobbies and interests. Remember that self-care is not selfish, but essential for overall well-being.
2. **Establish a Consistent Routine:** Create a daily routine that provides structure and predictability for the entire family. Allocate specific times for chores, homework, family meals, and relaxation. Adjust the routine as needed to accommodate changes in work or school schedules.
3. **Practice Mindfulness and Meditation:** Introduce mindfulness and meditation practices, such as deep breathing exercises or guided imagery, to help reduce stress and increase focus. Encourage family members to practice these techniques when feeling overwhelmed or anxious. Consider participating in family yoga or meditation sessions to promote relaxation and togetherness.
4. **Focus on Effective Communication:** Foster open and honest communication within the family by setting aside regular times for family discussions. Address conflicts and concerns in a constructive manner, using active listening and empathy. Encourage teenagers with stress to express their feelings and provide support without judgment.
5. **Simplify Your Schedule:** Assess your family's schedule and identify areas where you can cut back on activities or commitments. Prioritize tasks and events based on their importance and the overall well-being of the family. Use a digital tool, like a family calendar app, to keep track of schedules and appointments.
6. **Share Responsibilities and Delegate Tasks:** Divide household chores and responsibilities among family members, ensuring that the workload is distributed fairly. Teach children age-appropriate tasks and skills to foster a sense of responsibility and independence. Regularly reassess and adjust task assignments based on each family member's needs and abilities.
7. **Make Time for Family Bonding:** Schedule regular family activities, such as game nights, movie nights, or outdoor adventures, to help strengthen bonds and relieve stress. Encourage open communication and emotional support during these activities. Use this time to connect with your children and address any signs of stress or anxiety.
8. **Promote a Healthy Lifestyle:** Encourage regular exercise for every family member, as physical activity can help reduce stress and improve mental health. Maintain a balanced diet and avoid excessive consumption of sugary or processed foods. Ensure that all family members are getting adequate sleep, as sleep deprivation can exacerbate stress and negatively impact overall well-being.
9. **Seek Professional Help if Needed:** Recognize when professional help may be necessary for dealing with stress, anxiety, or other mental health concerns. Consult with a mental health professional or counselor to determine the most appropriate course of action. Encourage open discussions about mental health and the importance of seeking help when needed.
10. **Evaluate your Lifestyle:** As a parent, it's important to model healthy behavior for your children. Children are more likely to lead a healthy lifestyle and less likely to associate stress with unhealthy behavior if the whole family practices healthy living and good stress management techniques. So, ask yourself-How do I respond to stress? Do I tend to overeat or engage in other unhealthy behavior. Such as smoking and drinking alcohol, when I feel stressed? In what ways could my stress coping skills be improved?
11. **Talk about it:** If you notice that your children are looking worried or stressed, ask them what's on their minds. Having regular conversations can help a family work together to better understand and address any stressors children are experiencing. Low levels of parental communication have been associated with poor decision making among children and teens.¹ Talking to your children and promoting open communication and problem solving is just as important as eating well and getting enough exercise and sleep.
12. **Create a Healthy Environment:** Your home, work space and even social environment can influence your behavior. Altering your environment can help alleviate stress. For example, cleaning up a cluttered environment can help. Look around your home and even your car and ask yourself, does this space feel clear and relaxing? Clearing up your home space for the family is something you and your children can control, and it teaches children to focus on those things they can control when feeling stressed.
13. **Focus on Yourself:** The correlation between health, obesity and unhealthy choices is strong. When you and your family are experiencing stress, make a conscious decision to take care of yourselves. Get adequate doses of nutrients, physical activity and sleep. When you feel overwhelmed it is easy sometimes to fall into cycles such as eating fast food, plugging into sedentary electronic activities like playing video games or watching TV, or not getting enough sleep. Research shows that children who are sleep-deficient are more likely to have behavioral problems. And, parents have an extraordinary amount of influence on their children's food choices. A healthy dinner followed by an activity with your family, such as walking, bike riding, playing catch or a board game, and topped off with a good night's sleep can do a lot to manage or to lessen the negative effects of stress.
14. **Change one Habit at a Time:** You may aspire for your family to make multiple important changes at once such as eating healthier foods, being more physically active, getting a better night's sleep or spending more time together. However, if you are already overextended from juggling many different responsibilities, doing all of this at once can feel overwhelming. Changing behaviors usually takes time. By starting with changing one behavior, you and your family are more likely to experience success, which can then encourage your family to tackle other challenges and to continue making additional healthy changes

15. Replace Unhealthy Coping Strategies with Healthy Ones: Think about the ways you currently manage and cope with stress in your life. Your stress journal can help you identify them. Are your coping strategies healthy or unhealthy? Many of us cope with stress in ways that make us feel better temporarily- but compound the problem in the long run.

Unhealthy ways of Dealing with Stress

- Using alcohol or drugs to relax.
- Bingeing on junk or comfort food.
- Zoning out for hours on your phone or TV.
- Withdrawing from friends, family, and social activities.
- Sleeping too much.
- Filling up every minute of the day to avoid facing problems.
- Taking out your stress on others
- Procrastinating.

If your methods of coping with stress aren't contributing to your greater emotional and physical health, it's time to find healthier ones. No single method works for everyone or in every situation, so experiment with different stress management techniques and strategies. Focus on what makes you feel calm and in control.

16. Practice the 4 A's of Stress Management: There are many healthy ways to reduce stress or cope with its effects, but they all require change. You can either change the situation or change your reaction. When deciding which option to choose, it's helpful to think of the

4 A's

- Avoid
- Alter
- Accept
- Adapt.

1. Avoid Unnecessary Stress: Not all stress can be avoided, and it's not healthy to avoid a situation that needs to be addressed. But you may be surprised by the number of stressors in your life that you can eliminate.

- **Learn how to say "no.":** Know your limits and stick to them. Whether in your personal or professional life, taking on more than you can handle is a sure-fire recipe for stress.
- **Avoid People who Stress you out:** If someone consistently causes stress in your life, limit the amount of time you spend with that person, or end the relationship.
- **Take Control of your Environment:** If the evening news makes you anxious, turn off the TV. If traffic makes you tense, take a longer but less-travelled route. If going to the market is an unpleasant chore, do your grocery shopping online.
- **Avoid Hot-button Topics:** If you get upset over religion or politics, cross them off your conversation list. If you repeatedly argue about the same subject with the same people, stop bringing it up or excuse yourself when it's the topic of discussion.
- **Pare Down your to-do List:** Analyze your schedule, responsibilities, and daily tasks. If you've got too much on your plate, distinguish between the "should" and the "musts." Drop tasks that aren't truly necessary to the bottom of the list or eliminate them entirely.

2. Alter the Situation: If you can't avoid a stressful situation, try to alter it. Often, this involves changing the way you communicate and operate in your daily life.

- **Express your Feelings Instead of bottling them up:** If something or someone is bothering you, communicate your concerns in an open and respectful way. If you don't voice your feelings, resentment will build and the stress will increase.
- **Be Willing to Compromise:** When you ask someone to change their behavior, be willing to do the same. If you both are willing to bend at least a little, you'll have a good chance of finding a happy middle ground.
- **Be More Assertive:** Don't take a backseat in your own life. Deal with problems head on, doing your best to anticipate and prevent them. If you've got an exam to study for and your chatty roommate just got home, say up front that you only have five minutes to talk.
- **Find Balance:** All work and no play are a recipe for burnout. Try to find a balance between work and family life, social activities and solitary pursuits, daily responsibilities and downtime.

3. Adapt to the Stressor: If you can't change the stressor, change yourself. You can adapt to stressful situations and regain your sense of control by changing your expectations and attitude.

- **Reframe Problems:** Try to view stressful situations from a more positive perspective. Rather than fuming about a traffic jam, look at it as an opportunity to pause and regroup, listen to your favourite radio station, or enjoy some alone time.
- **Look at the big Picture:** Take perspective of the stressful situation. Ask yourself how important it will be in the long run. Will it matter in a month? A year? Is it really worth getting upset over? If the answer is no, focus your time and energy elsewhere.
- **Adjust your Standards:** Perfectionism is a major source of avoidable stress. Stop setting yourself up for failure by demanding perfection. Set reasonable standards for yourself and others, and learn to be okay with "good enough."
- **Practice Gratitude:** 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.

4. Accept the Things you can't Change: Some sources of stress are unavoidable. You can't prevent or change stressors such as the death of a loved one, a serious illness, or a national recession. In such cases, the best way to cope with stress is to accept things as they are. Acceptance may be difficult, but in the long run, it's easier than railing against a situation you can't change.

- **Don't try to Control the Uncontrollable:** Many things in life are beyond our control, particularly the behavior of other people. Rather than stressing out over them, focus on the things you can control such as the way you choose to react to problems.
- **Look for the Upside:** When facing major challenges, try to look at them as opportunities for personal growth. If your own poor choices contributed to a stressful situation, reflect on them and learn from your mistakes.

- **Learn to Forgive:** Accept the fact that we live in an imperfect world and that people make mistakes. Let go of anger and resentments. Free yourself from negative energy by forgiving and moving on.
- **Share your Feelings:** Expressing what you're going through can be very cathartic, even if there's nothing you can do to alter the stressful situation. Talk to a trusted friend or make an appointment with a therapist.

17. Other Stress Management Techniques: In addition to practicing the 4 A's of stress management, there are other techniques and strategies that you can use to better manage stress. We all respond to stress and stress management techniques in different ways, so experiment with the following approaches to find what works best for you.

Technique 1: Move more during your Day

When you're stressed, the last thing you probably feel like doing is getting up and exercising. But physical activity is a huge stress reliever- and you don't have to be an athlete or spend hours in a gym to experience the benefits. Exercise releases endorphins that make you feel good, and it can also serve as a valuable distraction from your daily worries. While you'll get the most benefit from regularly exercising for 30 minutes or more, it's okay to build up your fitness level gradually. Even very small activities can add up over the course of a day. The first step is to get yourself up and moving. Here are some easy ways to incorporate exercise into your daily schedule:

- Put on some music and dance around.
- Take your dog for a walk.
- Walk or cycle to the grocery store.
- Use the stairs at home or work rather than an elevator.
- Park your car in the farthest spot in the lot and walk the rest of the way.
- Pair up with an exercise partner and encourage each other as you work out.
- Play ping-pong or an activity-based video game with your kids.

Technique 2: Better Manage your Time

Poor time management can cause a lot of stress. When you're stretched too thin and running behind, it's hard to stay calm and focused. Plus, you'll be tempted to avoid or cut back on all the healthy things you should be doing to keep stress in check, like socializing and getting enough sleep. The good news: there are things you can do to achieve a healthier work-life balance.

- **Don't Over-commit Yourself:** Avoid scheduling things back-to-back or trying to fit too much into one day. All too often, we underestimate how long things will take.
- **Prioritize Tasks:** Make a list of tasks you have to do, and tackle them in order of importance. Do the high-priority items first. If you have something particularly unpleasant or stressful to do, get it over with early. The rest of your day will be more pleasant as a result.
- **Break Projects into Small Steps:** If a large project seems overwhelming, make a step-by-step plan. Focus on one manageable step at a time, rather than taking on everything at once.
- **Delegate Responsibility:** You don't have to do it all yourself, whether at home, school, or on the job. If other people can take care of the task, why not let them? Let go of the desire to control or oversee every little step. You'll be letting go of unnecessary stress in the process.

Technique 3: Reach out and Connect to Others

There is nothing more calming than spending quality time with another human being who makes you feel safe and understood. In fact, face-to-face interaction triggers a cascade of hormones that counteracts the body's defensive "fight-or-flight" response. It's nature's natural stress reliever (as an added bonus, it also helps stave off depression and anxiety). So, make it a point to connect regularly and in person with family and friends.

Technique 4: Make time for fun and Relaxation

Beyond a take-charge approach and a positive attitude, you can reduce stress in your life by carving out "me" time. Don't get so caught up in the hustle and bustle of life that you forget to take care of your own needs. Nurturing yourself is a necessity, not a luxury. If you regularly make time for fun and relaxation, you'll be in a better place to handle life's stressors.

- **Set Aside Leisure time:** Include rest and relaxation in your daily schedule. Don't allow other obligations to encroach. This is your time to take a break from all responsibilities and recharge your batteries.
- **Do something you enjoy Every Day:** Make time for leisure activities that bring you joy, whether it be stargazing, playing the piano, or working on your bike.
- **Keep your Sense of Humour:** This includes the ability to laugh at yourself. The act of laughing helps your body fight stress in a number of ways.
- **Take up a Relaxation Practice:** Relaxation techniques such as yoga, meditation, and deep breathing activate the body's relaxation response, a state of restfulness that is the opposite of the fight or flight or mobilization stress response. As you learn and practice these techniques, your stress levels will decrease and your mind and body will become calm and centred.

Technique 5: Maintain Balance with a Healthy Lifestyle:

In addition to regular exercise, there are other healthy lifestyle choices that can increase your resistance to stress.

- **Eat a Healthy Diet:** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.
- **Reduce Caffeine and Sugar:** The temporary "highs" caffeine and sugar provide often end with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugar snacks in your diet, you'll feel more relaxed and you'll sleep better.
- **Avoid Alcohol, Cigarettes, and Drugs:** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don't avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with problems head on and with a clear mind.
- **Get Enough Sleep:** Adequate sleep fuels your mind, as well as your body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally.

Conclusion

Learning how to reduce stress in a busy life is essential for maintaining a balanced and healthy family dynamic. By employing these best stress-reducing techniques for families, you can support everyone in your household, from stressed parents to overwhelmed teenagers. Remember, managing stress is an ongoing journey, and open communication, self-care, and a strong support system are the pillars of a resilient, thriving family.

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