

Tips: How to manage stress better

Here you will find tips on many topics that, in our experience, are easy to implement and do not take much time. The focus is on tips that you can implement yourself and do not have to rely on external help.

To start, pick two to three things that suit you and create a routine for yourself. This works best if you set a reminder for it, because it takes 21 days to establish a new habit. During that time, we simply need to remind ourselves of what we want to incorporate back into our lives. Remember, small steps are steps and better than nothing. 💡 !

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Using time more effectively

- **The 3-minute rule:** If a task takes less than 3 minutes, do it immediately. This helps make your workday more efficient by reducing your mental load and creating a sense of productivity.
- **The Pomodoro Technique:** Work with concentration for 25 minutes and then take a 5-minute break. This will help you keep your concentration high. Because when it drops, we are much less efficient than we think.
- **Do not disturb mode:** Activate the "Do not disturb" mode on your cell phone and in your e-mail program for one hour so that you can work undisturbed. If an hour seems too long at first, start with 15 minutes and increase the time daily. You will notice how often you are disturbed by this routine! You will increase the quality of your work and reduce the stress caused by constant interruptions.

Switch off faster after work

- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** Tense one muscle group after the other to the maximum and relax them again. This enables faster and deeper physical relaxation. At the same time, you reduce stress hormones and promote physical well-being.
- **Digital Detox:** 30 minutes without a smartphone. This helps you to switch off the hectic "always have to keep up with everything" for a moment. Even if it's just 30 minutes, you'll appreciate this break.
- **The 4-7-8 Breathing Technique:** Inhale for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and exhale for 8 seconds. Repeat this 4 times. This simple breathing exercise calms the mind because you are busy counting, and at the same time it improves oxygenation of the brain, promotes relaxation and brings you into the present.
- **Inner volume control:** If an inner dialog won't let you go, imagine you are listening to this dialog on the radio. Then consciously turn down the volume so that it is more of a background noise and the content no longer requires your attention. If you turned the volume all the way down, your subconscious would immediately be alerted and make even more mental noise. If you turn it down, you accept that something is there, but you make it as comfortable as possible and it will affect you less.

Wenn die Arbeit keinen Spass mehr macht

- **The "Three good things" exercise:** Keep a gratitude diary and every evening write down three things that went well that day. These can also be very mundane things. We tend to notice the negative things more, and this exercise helps balance and promotes gratitude.

- **Micro time-outs:** While you're working, take 5-minute time-outs every now and then where you do nothing. This can boost your creativity and productivity by getting you out of a mental rut.
- **What could you do?** One reason why you no longer enjoy your work is that you don't feel you have a say in it. Therefore, think about what you can do to make work more fun again. This will stimulate your creativity and reduce the feeling of no longer having control, even if nothing about the actual work changes.

Enjoying the little things in life

- **The "look of gratitude":** Take 30 seconds every morning to become aware of three things for which you are grateful. You will start the day with a positive attitude.
- **The "smile experiment":** Consciously smile to yourself, even when you are alone, for about a minute. When you smile, there is no room for negative thoughts in parallel, and it also lifts your mood because happy hormones are released.
- **The "three senses rule":** Take a minute to consciously perceive your surroundings. What can you see, hear and smell? This promotes mindfulness and helps you to be in the moment.

Physical complaints

If you have physical complaints such as palpitations, headaches, back pain, gastrointestinal problems, etc., then it is important that you first clarify these complaints with your doctor so that you can be sure that they are purely stress-related. That is why we do not give you any tips here.

Do not neglect social activities, friends and hobbies

- **15 minutes a day:** Devote at least 15 minutes a day to your hobbies or friends, even if it's just a quick phone call. This will help you stay connected to your social network and promote work-life balance.
- **The "invitation rule":** Don't turn down an invitation to a social activity at least once a month. This prevents social isolation and promotes social interaction, which can have a positive effect on your mental health.
- **The "small circle trick":** If large groups are overwhelming for you, meet with one or two people close to you instead. This allows for social interaction without the stress that large groups can cause.
- **The "5-minute strategy":** If you have to force yourself to go to a social activity, tell yourself that you can leave after 5 minutes if you don't like it. This takes the pressure off the situation and makes it more likely that you will actually go. Often it turns out that it's not as bad as you feared, and is actually good for you.

Meeting your own demands and expectations

This is certainly one of the most difficult points. When you feel you're not good enough, you know it's not true. The difficult thing is that this self-deprecation is a negative spiral that we reinforce with techniques that should actually interrupt it.

Therefore, the tips here are unusual at first glance, but they work!

- **The "self-pity paradox":** Take a moment to feel so intensely - so truly theatrically - sorry for yourself. We call this the "dying swan mode." Do this until you find yourself smiling at yourself because it's a bit over the top now, isn't it? That's how you can break a spiral of self-loathing.
- **The worst-case scenario exercise:** Think about what could happen in the worst case if you don't meet others' expectations and how you would deal with it. This reduces anxiety and helps you focus on solutions instead of problems.
- **Affirmation ban:** If you want to suffer less from irrational self-deprecation, stop immediately telling yourself that you are good after all. This has exactly the opposite effect. This is because your subconscious mind is stronger than any affirmation and must prove anew that you are wrong with every affirmation. With your mind you know that your performance is sufficient. So you better accept how bad you seem to be. Of course, we know that this is not so, but this is how you can trick your subconscious mind.
- **New decisions instead of affirmation:** Something that the subconscious tolerates is to make a new decision. For example, instead of "I'm okay and lovable" (=affirmation), tell yourself, "Regardless of whether I always devalue myself, I now choose to accept and love myself as I am."

Try it out for yourself: Do both affirmations and feel inside yourself. You will probably feel a strange feeling in the stomach area with the affirmation, while it feels light and peaceful with the new decision. This is because there is a "resistance" with the positive affirmation and not with the new decision.

When you have difficulty taking a break

- **The "5-minute time-out":** Consciously take 5 minutes to take a break, even if you think you can't afford it. Get up, stretch, or take a short walk. This short time out will increase your productivity and concentration, and you'll even gain time!
- **The "water trick":** Every time you drink a glass of water, take the opportunity for a little break. Take a deep breath and stretch. This not only keeps you hydrated, but also gives you regular little breaks.
- **The "breathing break":** If you really don't have time for a longer pause, try the 4-7-8 breathing technique. Inhale for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and exhale for 8 seconds. This will help you re-center and relieve stress.

Dealing with strong emotions:

- **Where is the emotion?** Feel inside yourself where in the body you perceive the emotion. We perceive every strong emotion physically. And it can be anywhere. Now imagine how this bodily feeling comes into the flow and leaves the body again. This can also be anywhere.
- **Acceptance:** Do not fight the feeling but accept that it is there. You know that it will go away. If, on the other hand, you ask yourself, "Why do I have this now?" or "Why can't I have this now?" you are resisting and preventing the feeling from disappearing.
- **Take responsibility:** No one but you is responsible for you feeling this way. This attitude gives you strength and prevents you from being in "victim mode", because you don't have to wait for something to change on the outside.

Sleep better

- **Sleep routine:** Try to go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time in the morning. This regulates your internal clock and promotes better sleep.
- **If you can't fall asleep - Get back up:** If you can't fall asleep, get back up and do something. It's counterproductive to frantically try to fall asleep. Distract yourself, read an exciting book or watch an episode of your favorite show.
- **The blue light filter:** Activate the blue light filter (or night mode) on your smartphone or computer at least one hour before bedtime. This reduces eye strain and promotes the production of the sleep hormone melatonin.
- **The "Breathing Technique 4-7-8":** Breathe in for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 7 seconds, and exhale in 8 seconds. Repeat this several times. This calms the mind and prepares the body for sleep.
- **Exercise:** Get enough (more) exercise and generally move around as much as possible. Take the stairs instead of the elevator, go for a walk in nature or do something you enjoy. The most important thing is to do something you enjoy. If it's a must-do, you won't keep it up for long.
- **The "sleep diary":** Keep a diary in which you record your sleep habits and quality. Note what you ate or drank before bed and how well you slept. This may alert you to something that is preventing you from sleeping.

Reducing worries about the future:

- **The "worry box method":** Write down all your worries on small pieces of paper and put them in a "worry box". Once a week, open the box and see which worries have been resolved. This helps you externalize your worries and gives you a new perspective.
- **The "three-question check":** Ask yourself three questions about every worry: Is it real? Is it current? What can I specifically do about it now? This shifts the focus from unfounded or future worries to the here and now, and if necessary, you take action.
- **Activate your resources:** Become aware of how many difficulties and crises you have already mastered in life. Challenges are as much a part of life as the salt in the soup. In our glossy world, it is suggested that there is something wrong with you when you face challenges. This is not so, with all the "why" questions you are rather creating an additional problem for yourself. Don't be offended when life presents you with a challenge to overcome.

Stopping racing / circling thoughts

- **Inner volume control:** This tip is also suitable here. If your thoughts always revolve around the same topic, imagine you are listening to this dialog on the radio. Then consciously turn down the volume so that it is more of a background noise and the content no longer requires attention. If you turned the volume all the way down, your subconscious would immediately be alerted and create even more mental noise. If you turn it down, you accept that something is there, but you make it as comfortable as possible and it will affect you less.
- **The "5-4-3-2-1 method":** name 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 things you smell, and 1 thing you taste. The point of this is to distract your mind. You can't focus on sensations and circling thoughts at the same time.
- **Distract yourself by getting moving:** Distract yourself by getting moving. For example, run quickly up a flight of stairs, do a sprint or squats. The more you challenge yourself, the better it will work.
- **Acceptance:** Accept the circling thoughts. If you fight them, they will stay because there is resistance in the subconscious mind. If you accept that they are there, you create the best conditions for letting them go.
- **The "visualization method":** Imagine your circling thoughts floating along like leaves on a river and finally disappearing from your field of vision. Or you can also imagine the thoughts as passing clouds.

Make decisions more easily

- **The "worst-case scenario test":** Think about what could happen in the worst case when you make a certain decision. This takes away the fear of making the wrong decision and enables a better risk assessment.
- **Coherent decisions:** Think about previous decisions. What did it feel like in the past? With coherent decisions, it's often the case that it doesn't feel like a "decision" at all, right? So, if you're struggling with a decision, it could be that it's not time yet, for whatever reason.
- **Pro and con lists:** We recommend pro and con lists only to organize facts. Every decision is made purely emotionally and with extensive pro and con lists you complicate the decision-making process.
- **Visualization:** Imagine you decide to do x, how does that feel? Feel into your body and pay attention to how it feels. Light, free, happy, oppressive, anxiety-provoking, coherent, neutral, ...? After that, imagine that you choose y and see how it makes you feel. Ignore all thoughts about it and focus only on what it triggers in your body. You will find that it can feel coherent even when your mind is predicting horror scenarios.