



Checklist for Handling Overstress

Reduce Your Stress Load

- Reduce the pace of change in your life.
- Reduce social obligations.
- Reduce work or school obligations.
- Postpone changes in your living situation.
- Say "No" more often.
- Eliminate possible food or environmental allergens.
- Reduce environmental toxins.

Get Off The "Roller Coaster"

- Diet: Take a multivitamin, mineral, trace element preparation; stabilize your blood sugar; eat more vegetables.
- Exercise: Twenty minutes to two hours, three times a week.
- Stop Your Pick-Me-Up's (consult your physician).
- Stop Your Put-Me-Down's (consult your physician).

Do A "Rest For Your Mind" Activity

- Exercise
- Recreational reading, arts, crafts, music
- Dance
- Meditation
- Yoga
- Biofeedback
- Self-Hypnosis
- Religious counseling

Help Your Body Clock Re-Set Itself

- Set regular sleep times.
- Avoid time zone shifts or rapid changes in your work shift.
- Use daylight spectrum fluorescent lights to set your body clock's "awake time."



Visit A Physician

- Check for hidden illness

Visit A Counselor

- Obtain help with self relaxation and general psychological counseling.

Three Rules To Permanently Conquer Overstress

Rule One: Learn To Read Your Body Signs

- Learn to check your body frequently for signs of overstress. Watch for the telltale disturbances in your sleep pattern, as this is usually the earliest sign of overstress.
- You must learn to read your body signs in much the same way as a diabetic learns the early warning signs of abnormal blood sugar. In order to cope successfully with diabetes, a diabetic has to learn to read his body's signals. If he has a constant thirst, fatigue and excessive urination, that means the sugar is too high. If he has shakiness, irritability, and perspiration that means the blood sugar is too low. In order to live with diabetes, the diabetic must understand what these signals mean.
- Likewise, if you are a person who is prone to overstress, you must learn to look for its earliest warning signs. As soon as your sleep patterns change, or you experience fatigue, lack of enjoyment of life, anxiety, multiple aches and pains -- that is the time to go through the overstress checklist.

Rule Two: Exchange Your Stresses

- Keep your stress level below your individual overstress point by "exchanging stresses". If a new stress comes into your life, then make room for it by eliminating or postponing another stress. This way, your total stress level remains low.
- The natural tendency is for people to let their stresses pile up rather than exchanging them.
- Overstress gradually occurs. With the development of overstress, the person starts taking off on the wild roller coaster of ill health.
- In order to stay healthy, learn to exchange your stresses.



Rule Three: Use Relaxation Techniques/Therapies

- If you are feeling ill from overstress, remember that the troubled sleep, fatigue, aches, lack of enjoyment of life, and panic attacks are caused by chemical changes in your brain. Effective treatment is available now.
- Many techniques for conquering and managing stress are given on this website. Use them.

Commonsense Remedies for Stress

Steps to Help You Achieve Emotional Well-Being

- Plan ahead.
- Make a to-do list in order of priorities.
- Do not bite off more than you can chew. Don't try to pack more into your day than you can cope with comfortably.
- Just say 'no' to unrealistic deadlines. There is no need to feel guilty if you have to change plans or arrangements because of an impossibly tight schedule.
- Finish the most important task before you tackle the next one.
- Take regular breaks. Short rests between periods of concentrated mental effort, particularly when you are frustrated with a project or are unable to move forward, can be refreshing and help you to refocus. Five minutes of each hour or 15 minutes every two hours allows a more manageable pace.
- Take regular vacations.
- Stop Living Beyond Your Means: Living beyond your means can actually make you sick. A researcher at the University of Alabama studied British census data on 8,000 households and found that families that tried to maintain lifestyles they couldn't afford were likely to have health problems.
- Sit up straight. A good upright posture improves breathing and increases blood flow to the brain. We often slouch when stressed, which restricts breathing and blood flow and can magnify feelings of helplessness.
- Learn to recognize your own symptoms of stress. These may include irritability, sleeplessness, social and/or sexual withdrawal, loss of interest in activities, and lack of appetite.
- Talk about stressful events to a friend or spouse before you reach a breaking point. If you can, let go and cry. Like talking, crying externalizes pent-up feelings and may reduce the risk of stress-related illness. If you need extra



help, seek counseling from a mental health professional.

- Recognize that some things cannot be changed and put your energy toward those that can.
- Identify the sources of your stress. This gives you more choice in how you react. If necessary, make a note of the circumstances, and see if a pattern emerges. As you delve deeper, you are more likely to discover the root of your problem. This will allow you to solve it at the deepest, most effective level.
- Cultivate an optimistic attitude. Don't talk yourself into believing that you can't cope.
- Reduce your exposure to events that tick you off. Go to the bank at an off-hour to avoid maddening lines. Mask outside noise by turning on relaxing music.
- Maintain a sense of humor about it all.
- Learn to express anger in a constructive way. Keeping anger within you adds to feelings of stress; blowing up in a rage is almost as bad. Simply being able to say "that makes me very angry" and working out ways of avoiding anger-provoking situations are positive steps in dealing with anger.
- Focus on others' rather than your own problems. If time permits, do a few hours of volunteer work each week.
- Exercise every day, even if you have time for only a brisk, 20-minute walk.
- Stretch your chest for better breathing: The tense musculature of a person under stress can make breathing difficult and impaired breathing can aggravate the anxiety you already feel. To relax your breathing, roll your shoulders up and back then relax. The first time, inhale deeply as they go back, exhale as they relax. Repeat four or five more times, then inhale deeply again. Repeat the entire sequence four times.
- Get a Hand Exerciser: Keep a hand exerciser or a tennis ball in your desk at work and give it a few squeezes during tense times. When stress shoots adrenaline into the bloodstream, that calls for muscle action. Squeezing something provides a release that satisfies our bodies' fight-or-flee response.
- Pop a bubble. A study found that students were able to reduce their feelings of tension by popping two sheets of those plastic air capsules used in packaging.
- Soak in a Hot Tub: Soaking in hot tub is a very good stress-reliever. We have covered this in detail elsewhere.
- Hold your breath. This technique should help you relax in 30 seconds. Take a deep breath and keep it in. Holding palm to palm, press your fingers together. Wait 5 seconds, then slowly exhale through your lips while letting your hands relax. Do this five or six times until you unwind.
- Pay attention to such signs of stress as a tension headache and stop what you



are doing for a rest break. If possible, take a warm bath or treat yourself to a massage during periods of stress. If this is not possible, practice deep abdominal breathing whenever you feel muscular tension setting in.

- Don't neglect your diet. Start off with a breakfast containing protein and carbohydrates for sustained energy and don't let the demands of your day get in the way of lunch.
- Take a ten-minute holiday: Meditation is a great stress reliever, but sometimes it's hard to find the time or place for it. Take a mini-vacation right at your desk or kitchen table instead. Just close your eyes, breathe deeply (from your stomach) and picture yourself lying on a beach in Mexico or Hawaii. (Guided Imagery) Feel the warmth of the sun. Hear the waves. Smell the salt air. Just put a little distance between yourself and your stress. A few minutes a day can be a great help.
- Keep it Quiet or Down: If you work, live or play in a high-noise area, consider wearing earplugs. Make sure the ones you buy reduce sound by at least 20 decibels.
- Remember, on their deathbed, no one says, "I wish I'd spent more time at the office."

Visit Your Doctor When

- You have uncontrollable anger and you don't know why.
- You have insomnia.
- You have difficulty sustaining relationships.
- You have persistent feelings of guilt.
- You consistently rehash incidents in your mind.

Overstress that you can not clear up yourself may be the **earliest warning sign of some hidden illnesses such as:**

- Thyroid disease
- Calcium imbalance (too much or too little)
- Anemia
- Diabetes
- Manic-depression (Bi-polar disorder)
- Liver disease
- Kidney malfunction
- Vitamin deficiency
- Hormone deficiency