



# 5 Quick and Easy Ways to Keep your Stress Levels under control this Year

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Stress is something most people experience a lot of. They have experienced it in the past in their work and their personal lives, and this year is likely to be much the same. There is lots of information on how to manage stress. Tons and tons of it. And yet, people still suffer a great deal from stress. So, in this newsletter I want to talk about simple things you can do daily, that do not take a lot of time, and that can help you. You do not need to put aside hours to apply stress management techniques. If you can do that, then do it. However, most people complain about stress and then carry on with their hectic lives. It is possible to take a few minutes to manage stress.

Below are some easy, simple things to do that will help you remain calm and at peace, and which do not take much time.

1. Reduce the Load. Stress is about overload. There is a perception that the amount of work to do exceeds the resources to do it. So, one way to reduce stress is to get rid of some of the work. You can do this by eliminating certain activities. If you are studying part-time, working, and planning to move house, leave the moving house until your studies are finished. If you have too many tasks to do at work, then delegate some of them. If you are too busy with work and home, then get someone to help you at home – cooking for you or transporting children to activities.
2. Exercise for five minutes. The second action you can take is to exercise. And, yes, you can do it. You don't need to exercise for more than 5 minutes. If you are not planning on training for a marathon or in need of some intense exercise, even as little as walking for 5 minutes can help you feel less stressed. All the adrenaline and cortisol (stress hormones) that are released can be put to better use by exercising. Five minutes is not a lot. You can do that. You can dance, walk, run, skip, etc. for five minutes.

3. Fun outing. Once a month do an activity for a half a day or a full day, that requires a change of scenery. Go game spotting. Go on a hike. Go to a new outdoor venue. Go and canoe or swim or zipline. Go to an art gallery, museum, aquarium, etc. Just go and do something different in a different place.
4. Breathe deeply. Take deep breaths whenever you can. There are many ways to deal with stress and anxiety (which are not the same thing – stress is overload, anxiety is linked to a potential threat or fear), and one of the best is one of the easiest. Take deep breaths. Stop what you are doing periodically throughout the day and take ten deep breaths. More oxygen will get into your body and you will relax. When we are stressed our nervous system speeds up. Forcing yourself to take deep slow breaths means your nervous system has to slow down, putting you in a more relaxed state.
5. Change your self-talk. Mantra's work surprising well in helping people get through difficult moments. You read and repeat to yourself a saying (mantra) that will help you deal with the stress of the moment through changing your thoughts about the event/s. There are some standard ones that people have used, or you can even make up your own. Mantra's that people have used include:
  - a. This too shall pass
  - b. Everything is only temporary
  - c. It's going to be okay
  - d. I will get through this.
  - e. I am calm
  - f. I can deal with this
  - g. Everything will be okay

You do not have to spend the rest of this year in terrible stressed out state. And if, so far, your year has been stress-free, you can work to keep it like that. If you want to you can of course do a programme to manage stress which is more formal and more focused than the points I have mentioned above. The point of this article though, is that if you feel you are too stressed to even take the time to follow a stress management programme, there are simple steps you can take, that take little to no time to complete, that will help you.

Try and do some of these above-mentioned steps regularly. What happens is we usually feel fine and the stress levels build up until we can't sleep, are nauseous, battle to focus, or are irritable, and show the signs of a lot of stress before we realise we need to do something. Success in life is a lot about self-discipline. So is managing stress. Preferably don't wait until your stress levels are out of control before you do something. Work on creating habits. Add steps to your life and practice some of these steps on a regular basis so the actions become automatic. You want to reach a point where you don't even have to think about taking actions to manage stress. They are practiced so regularly that they have now become part of who you are. If you can keep your stress levels at a low or moderate level, then when something big happens, you can deal with it, and won't be so overwhelmed and shaken by it.