



Deal With It: Stop Stressing About Stress

Teaching is a stressful profession what with mandates for performance, limited resources, increasing accountability for teachers and schools, and just the fact that you are in front of a group of students and charged with helping them reach their potential. Work-related stress is just one of the many types of stress we encounter in our lives on a day-to-day basis. Other areas of life such as social and personal/interpersonal, also have their stress factors. On top of this, a chemical dependency (smoking, alcohol, etc.) can also add to the stress you may be experience.

At the same time, we all need a little stress in our lives. It is stress that makes us get up in the morning rather than hitting the alarm clock to go back to sleep and it is stress that makes sure we keep our appointments and responsibilities in a timely manner. So, how do you deal with the bad stress in your life? On a basic level, try one or more of these strategies.

Control your anger. Watch for the next instance in which you find yourself becoming annoyed or angry at something trivial or unimportant, then practice letting go - make a conscious choice not to become angry or upset. Do not allow yourself to waste thought and energy where it isn't deserved. Effective anger management is a tried-and-true stress reducer.

Breathe. Breathe slowly and deeply. Before

reacting to the next stressful occurrence, take three deep breaths and release them slowly. If you have a few minutes, try out breathing exercises such as meditation or guided imagery.

Slow Down. Whenever you feel overwhelmed by stress, practice speaking more slowly than usual. You'll find that you think more clearly and react more reasonably to stressful situations. Stressed people tend to speak fast and breathlessly; by

slowing down your speech you'll also appear less anxious and more in control of any situation.

Complete one, simple "to do" on your To Do List. Jump start an effective time management strategy. Choose one simple thing you have been putting off (e.g. returning a phone call, making a doctor's appointment) and do it immediately. Just taking care of one nagging responsibility can be energizing and can improve your attitude.

Get some fresh air. Get outdoors for a brief break. Our grandparents were right about the healing power of fresh air. Don't be deterred by foul weather or a full schedule. Even five minutes on a balcony or terrace can be rejuvenating.

Refuel and replenish your body. Drink plenty of water and eat small, nutritious snacks. Hunger and dehydration, even before you're aware of them, can provoke aggressiveness and exacerbate feelings of anxiety and stress.

Check your posture. Hold your head and shoulders upright and avoid stooping or slumping. Bad posture can lead to muscle tension, pain, and increased stress.

Relax, Recharge and Rejuvenate. Plan something rewarding for the end of your stressful day, even if only a relaxing bath or half an hour with a good book. Put aside work, housekeeping or family concerns for a brief period before bedtime and allow yourself to fully relax. Don't spend this time planning tomorrow's schedule or doing chores you didn't get around to during the day. Remember that you need time to recharge and energize yourself - you'll be much better prepared to face another stressful day.

Work it out. Take time to exercise or engage in a sporting activity you enjoy to get any "aggression" out of your system.

Reflect. Reflect on the day's events, especially if something in particular is bothering you. Think about how you would handle it differently if you could or how you need to confront it the next day or the next time so that you are better prepared for it. Reflection is also a positive practice to

enhance what you are doing in your classroom and this, in turn, helps to reduce your stress level.

Sources of Job Stress

- Disorganization or inability to manage time.
- Conflict with supervisors or colleagues.
- Unqualified to do the job.
- Feeling overwhelmed.
- Inability to meet deadlines.
- Too many or too little responsibilities.
- Inability to utilize skills.
- Boredom.
- Backlog of papers and work.
- Arriving to work late.
- Always feeling rushed or hurried.
- Unrealistic work expectations.
- Lack of support.