

Five-Minute Stress Relief.com

Ways To Be More Productive

Take five minutes: to disengage from the information overload (See *Brain Overload*). Give yourself some time to regain yourself. Do nothing but relax for the first few minutes, take deep breaths and focus on feeling at peace in the moment. Nothing else.

Prioritize: when you feel ready, begin by writing down what you need to do for the next several hours. List the most important items first. Spell out what is essential so you stop trying to hold those thoughts in your head. When you resume work, you'll find it easier to focus only on the work at hand.

Delete nonessentials: eliminate anything that really isn't necessary. It will make you feel less pressured. Remember, if you finish the most important items in record time, you'll be able to add those extra tasks, but refrain from overburdening your schedule.

Avoid distractions: Forget answering those trivial emails and instant messages from others who are trying to avoid work. Keep it simple and your brain will surprise you how well it functions.

Avoid multi-tasking: do one task at a time. Studies prove your brain will be more accurate and require less effort than trying to spread yourself with several things at once.

Have confidence in yourself: we do live in a youthful culture, but don't get paranoid. If you're no longer a youngster, rely on your experience. Studies show that middle-aged adult's brains continue developing their white matter (transmits data), frontal lobe (higher emotional development) and temporal lobe (wisdom). Developing one's mental abilities throughout adulthood promotes brainpower growth, in a similar way that exercise builds stronger muscle tissue. And if you are young, you don't know enough to worry – just have some fun.

Expand your memory: write down whatever you need to remember. Hearing information, then seeing that information in written form strengthens your brain's retention by incorporating two senses, instead of one. Reading information out loud also re-enforces your brain's retention abilities.

Make acronyms or catch phrases: abbreviated words or phrases that help you remember information, such as: A-B-C-D (ways to spot suspicious moles) = Asymmetry, Border, Color and Diameter; MLB (acronym for major league baseball) = meet later with boss.

Forget about temporary feelings, thoughts: whatever you're thinking or feeling right now, you'll forget it ten minutes from now and it really won't matter then. Don't email your girlfriend, don't tell your coworker, just let it go. Since you can't stop your brain from experiencing thoughts and feelings, it doesn't pay to dwell on anything that distracts you from being effective in the present moment.

If you're a worrier, forget about it: Let's face it, your worries seldom actually happen and even if they do, you'll deal with it then. Mark Twain once said, "I've been through a lot of troubling times, most of which never happened." Enough said.

Don't panic if your master plan isn't going the way you planned: the first thing to go in every battle plan is the plan itself. That's because life is a fluid process – always changing. Every plan has to be modified, why should yours be different? What's important is to keep your focus on what has changed, what's the new reality that you need to deal with? That's the new path to victory.

Recognize you can change: human beings are the most adaptive beings on the planet.

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Accept what you can't change: when one resists this letting go process, they get caught up in a cycle of stress → pain → depression. By letting go, you'll live longer and happier.

Don't procrastinate: it only compounds the stress. It's easier to just do it and get it out of the way.

Reduce the importance of events: it's a matter of your wellbeing versus the event – and you're more important.

Communicating criticism: here's the metaphor – first pin the metal on the soldier, then shoot him. This means offer some praise or compliment first, before criticizing. (I know you meant well, however it would be more effective if you did it this way.)

Optimism, success and avoiding stress: a study of 500 adults (aged 60 to 98) found optimism and effective coping skills were the most important factors in aging well – not health.

Cut yourself some slack: If you're under unusual work pressure, loosen up on the house cleaning. Do what needs to be done and let the rest go until you have more time.

Break up large tasks onto smaller ones: devote small amounts of time completing each segment, so you don't burn out three-quarters the way through.

Sometimes taking a step back, is really taking one forward: when you're feeling at the end of your rope struggling with a project, take a breather from intense work pressure. Follow the three R's – recover, refocus and regenerate. Recover: treat yourself to a massage, a movie, something that relaxes you. Refocus: look at the "big picture," see the light at the end of the tunnel. Regenerate: try a fresh approach, either by employing a different work tactic or just rearranging your work set-up.