

Stress Triggers and How to Deal With Them

Stress can happen to anyone and can often cause ‘dis-ease’ in our bodies as well as negatively direct our actions and reactions, denigrating our quality of life.

Every day, things can happen that trigger our stress responses. Things such as:

Christmas/Holidays – choosing gifts to give, spending more than we can afford, eating more or eating foods that do not enrich our bodies, dealing with social obligations, and meeting others’ expectations.

Work – demanding bosses/clients/hours, job insecurities, and not doing what you love.

Family – non-harmonious relationships, too busy to spend time together, financial worries, house/car problems, and health/safety concerns.



Internet – computer breakdowns, problematic emails that require our attention, excessive texts, and social media overload (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).

The obvious solution is to be watchful and recognize our triggers when they first occur, making immediate changes so they don’t affect us. More often though, stress triggers happen and build momentum until we find ourselves caught up in tension without knowing how we got there. This is the point where we need to break the stress cycle.

I hope one or more of these stress tools will be helpful both in releasing initial stress triggers and in breaking the stress cycle.

Stress Tools

Be Mindful – Bring the stress trigger into the present moment, taking it from the unconscious mind into the conscious mind. This helps us put space between the stressors and our conditioned responses to them. Observing the trigger and our response in the present moment without judgement can help dissolve the momentum.

Plan ‘Down Time’ or Voids into Your Day – Silence your communication devices for a dedicated period of time each day. Though our schedules may not look like we have time for down time, using this approach may actually give us more time. By creating a void in our day, we reconnect with ourselves and allow ourselves to relax, be observant, and gain honesty.

Avoid Instant Responses – When a text or email arrives that needs your attention, read it and then wait before responding. When stress is directing our responses, we often miscommunicate and/or create a response from a reaction to triggers already active in us. By formulating our responses, we will be clearer and the communication duration is apt to be shorter. If a phone call comes in that is likely to be a trigger, let them leave a message. A response will be more valuable if there is clarity.

Use Breathing Techniques – When things come at us and contact is unavoidable, there are many techniques that can immediately take us from stress (fight or flight) to rest and relaxation. A full list can be found in the self-care article, “Magic Breath Tool Kit,” on my [website writings page](#). One that is particularly effective is the “Letting Go Breath” (Instant Tranquilizer Technique) that helps us remain steady and comfortable in many situations. Take a deep breath in through the nostrils and exhale through the mouth with a large sigh (audible or silent, depending on the situation).

Focus Inward – When you feel overcome by stress, find a quiet place and sit comfortably. Close your eyes and look inward. Breathe in and out through your nose and follow the breath as it comes and goes. When other thoughts come into the mind, notice them and let them drift away, always returning to the breath. Continue until you sense a slowing of the mind chatter and a releasing of stress’ grip.

Engage in a Yoga Snack – In the middle of a busy time, where ever you may be, stand up and take a 1-2 minute stretch that feels good inside the body. It could be something simple like reaching up with your arms or something stronger, such as rearranging your posture by rolling your shoulder blades back, tucking the chin, and reaching up with the crown of your head.

Take a Walk – Walking away from a stressful environment can break the spell. Get out in nature and notice the sky, trees, animals, and scenery. Hug a tree and share its strength. Feel the freedom of walking and continue for as long as you need to.

Most importantly, be watchful for your stress triggers and if/when you do feel caught up in a stress cycle, take a moment for YOU. By altering the momentum of the moment or situation, you offer space for fulfilling behavior and appropriate action rather than continued ‘knee jerk’ reactions created by stress.