

CORPORATED MANAGEMENT / HUMAN RESOURCES

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HOW TO MANAGE STRESS

THE clock is ticking. Everyone's counting on you. What would you do?

While most of us never have to deal with life-or-death situations of a bomb squad, everyday situations such as job interviews, public speaking, and family emergencies, can be every bit as stressful if we are not accustomed to dealing with them. Learning how to remain calm in times of stress will not only make things go more smoothly, it can also help you lead a better, healthier, and happier life. Here's how to keep your cool when you are under pressure:

1 Identify the cause of your stress. Is your heart pounding because someone just cut you off on the highway, or is it because of that presentation you have to give to your boss this afternoon? Think for a moment, and try to figure out what is really bothering you.

2 Choose your response. Even if you are powerless to change the source of your stress, you have the power to choose how you will respond to it. The appropriate response to stress should depend on what is causing it: you can either shake off your stress (ignore it, and let it go immediately) or face it head-on. In order to choose your response, ask yourself some questions:

- Does it matter? Yes, it is all small stuff, but how long will the source of these stress affect you?
- How much control do you have over the situation? You can't control the rain that's ruining your wedding, but you can control how

do calisthenics, do yoga, or lift weights, 10-20 minutes of physical exercise every day can relax you even when "nothing can".

4 Face your stress source head-on when you are ready. Getting stressed is not going to resolve the situation. Facing your stress head-on is really just a way to shake off a bad situation that you cannot, or should not ignore. If you can change the outcome of a situation that matters to you, the quickest way to overcome that fear or empower yourself is to take action as quickly as possible.

5 Make a plan. Sometimes you can resolve a stressful situation right away with one action, but often you will need several steps, perhaps over a long period. Write out a plan with attainable goals and a time line for reaching

well you do your algebra test tomorrow.

- Is the source of stress in the past, present, or in the future? You can't change the past, but you can respond to the present, and prepare for the future. Let your past troubles fade away.

3 Shake it all off. If a situation is beyond your control, or if it just isn't that important, stop worrying about it. Easier said than done?

- Inhale deeply. In your mind, count to five, and then exhale slowly through your mouth, for another five seconds. Repeat this breathing pattern until you feel comfortable with it.

- Think about something else. Get your mind off the stress by thinking about something that makes you happy.

- Visualise relaxing things, such as a deserted island, or a country road. Close your eyes and try to picture even minor details about the imaginary place, instead of the one you are in.

- Get away from the cause of the stress. If you can physically escape these stress trigger, do so. Leave the room, or pull off the road for a moment to put things into perspective.

- Get some exercise. Whether you go for a run, those goals.

6 Take one step at a time. A complex problem can be overwhelming, even when you have got your plan mapped out, but remember: the journey of a thousand miles begins with a step. Just focus on one small goal at a time.

7 Be realistic. In a culture that values a can-do attitude, it can be hard to accept that sometimes you can't do something, at least not within a given period of time. If that is the case, revise your time line or lower your expectations. If you can't do that, the situation qualifies as one which you can't control. Learn from your experience, but let it go.