

Strategies to Reduce Stress



1) Be flexible

Being a flexible thinker means that you can be okay when things get cancelled, don't go as planned, or turn out differently than expected. Being a flexible thinker makes the changes that happen in life easier to handle.

2) Use my inner coach

Did you know that we can control our thoughts? Sometimes our inner critic tells us we can't do things or that things are too hard. This inner critic needs to turn into an inner coach! Instead of thinking you can't do something, say, "I can do this with some hard work!" When you do it, you feel so much better about yourself for trying!

3) "Mistakes can help me grow"

Just like our inner critic, sometimes our brains tell us that things should be perfect or that if we make a mistake, we should feel bad about it. These are very unhelpful and unnecessary thoughts! Science has proven that mistakes make us better learners, helping our brains grow and making us more resilient people.

4) "I'm grateful for"

Science has also proven that if you say three things that you're grateful for daily, you will re-wire your brain for positive thinking. That means you'll be happier!! You can write your gratitudes down or just say them out loud. E.g. "I am grateful for the forest, my family and my health." If you like, create a gratitude journal and watch yourself smile.

5) Consider the size of the problem

Sometimes we get really upset by things that happen. If we have really big reactions to really small problems, then our reactions don't match the size of the problem. Being a flexible thinker helps us handle the small problems, so we don't lose our cool and feel emotionally hurt.

6) Take a brain break

Our brains get tired just like our bodies! Sometimes we need to take a break from thinking. We can do things like meditate, read something easy, or just stare out the window and think about nothing.

7) Practice mindfulness

Mindfulness is a technique that has been proven to bring gentle and peace into our hearts, minds, and bodies. Try the following apps: *Mindshift*, *Stop, Breathe, & Think*, *Complete Relax Lite Guided Meditation*.

8) Practice belly breathing

For deep breathing to calm you down, it's important to take breaths into your belly, so your belly moves out when you breathe in and collapses when you breathe out. It can be

helpful to put your hand over your belly button to feel your belly moving. Take at least five breaths or keep going until you feel good again.

9) Get some exercise

Getting your heart rate up for 20-30 minutes every day (so you're breathing hard and sweating) helps you control your feelings and think more clearly. For more information, see www.johnratey.com.

10) Squeeze my hands together or use a fidget tool

Doing something with your hands like squeezing them together or using a fidget tool helps you get rid of energy in a safe way.

11) Go to my quiet place

Set up a quiet place in your house that your child can go to when stressed. It can be as simple as a beanbag chair hidden from view or a play tent with pillows, a cozy blanket, stuffed animals, a