

Relax, recharge—even at school!

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO LESSEN STRESS?

You can learn simple stress-relieving strategies that are easy to practice anywhere—even in your classroom.

5 Steps to Destress

1. Recognize that stress is unavoidable. Everyone needs to learn the basics of stress management, because stress will always be a part of your life.
2. Realize that you have a choice about how to react to a stressful situation. You can't get rid of stress, but you can change your perception of it, and recondition your response to one of calm.
3. Listen to what your body is telling you. The next time you're feeling tense, ask yourself, "Where am I holding tension?" Whether you're tensing your neck, shoulders, or stomach, identify the hot spot and consciously try to let go of the tension there.
4. Listen to how you talk to yourself. Start listening to some of the words you repeat to yourself, such as, "I can't stand cafeteria duty," or "I'm never going to be able to _____." Reword your self-talk to erase the self-defeating tapes you've been replaying in your mind.

Are you setting "if only" or "what if" traps for yourself ("What if I get observed today and I'm not prepared?")? Often simply acknowledging that you're falling into these traps can help you reframe your attitudes.

5. Make a habit of relaxing. You've probably perfected the art of stressing but haven't cultivated the skill of relaxing. If you regularly practice basic relaxation techniques to quiet your mind, you'll actually stay calmer under stress and avoid accumulating tension, too. Five or ten minutes a day is all it takes.

Remember the whole you. Any one stress-buster isn't going to be effective unless you exercise regularly, eat three healthy meals a day, avoid too much caffeine, keep your consumption of alcohol moderate, get enough sleep, and carve out time for leisure. Regular physical and dental checkups are important, too. Can't cope? See a counselor.

Adapted from "A Teacher's Stress Survival Guide," originally published in Instructor Magazine, 1995. www.Scholastic.com/Instructor