

# 5 Tips to Relieve Stress

*Try some of these simple steps at home or at work to bring down your level of stress and help you more effectively manage the stress in your life:*

**1. Recognize that stress is normal.** If you feel worried, tense or angry, it does not necessarily mean that you're "not handling it well." It's human to be emotional. Rather than suppressing the feeling or "flying off the handle," write the feeling down. Start with "right now I feel..." Forget about the "because." Just naming the feeling often helps. Emotions that are ignored get bigger and more threatening.

**2. Get physical.** When we feel stressed, our bodies are sending us a message to MOVE. Our pulse quickens, our breathing speeds and our muscles tense up. This energy needs to be released somehow. Try taking a brisk walk or stretching now and then. Use your lunch breaks to move for a few minutes before returning to your desk. Alternately tighten and relax your fists, arms, legs, shoulders and stomach. The muscle motion drains off tension.

**3. Breathe deeply.** Sit comfortably with your hands on your lap and your legs uncrossed. Roll your head and hunch your shoulders up and down a few times. Next, breathe in evenly through your nose, then blow out gently through your mouth. On each exhale, silently repeat the word "one" or some other word like "peace" or "relax." Do this for five minutes, three times a day. This technique, known as the "relaxation response," has been proven to reduce blood pressure.



**4. Use your imagination.** The mind's ability to dream, to visualize and to imagine is a very powerful stress reduction tool. Close your eyes, breathe deeply and imagine that your mind is a movie theater. Project onto the blank screen any picture or place that you find relaxing. (Many people choose the ocean or a mountain stream.) Stay in this imaginary place for a few moments before returning to the task at hand.

**5. Learn to prioritize.** We cannot do everything at once. Let go of some of the things that you tell yourself you "must do." Have your kids clean up their own messes or learn to close the door and let it be their room. Teach other members of the family how to do their own laundry. Are there some tasks that do not really belong to you but that you have "volunteered" for anyway? Learn to say "no" or "catch me later." In short, learn to prevent stress (rather than just fighting it) by simplifying your life.



*If stress is affecting your daily life,  
The Village Employee Assistance Program  
can help. Call us at 800-627-8220.*