

Don't Stress About De-Stressing

Many people experience the feeling of being overwhelmed. Common sources of stress include losing a set of keys, being late to important meetings, and tackling stacks of paperwork. Many people believe the last thing they have time to think about is how to reduce stress and improve mental health, but doing three simple things can make a difference.

Exercising, positive thinking and deep breathing are the three tried-and-true methods to de-stress, according to Laurie Mintz, associate professor of educational, school and counseling psychology in the University of Missouri College of Education.

“Many people say they don’t have time to exercise, but those people need it the most,” Mintz said.

“Exercise is not a quick and easy fix for stress, but the research is incredibly clear that the relationship between exercise and stress reduction cannot be denied. Studies show that a daily cardiovascular exercise routine is very effective at reducing symptoms of stress and anxiety.”

For exercise to be beneficial, it must become a regular habit. Mintz advises finding an exercise routine that is feasible, whether it is walking, swimming or jogging. Positive thinking and deep breathing also can make a significant difference in stress levels. Mintz tells her clients to think about three things that make them happy or repeat a mantra such as, “I am calm,” before they put their feet on the ground in the morning.

“The way we frame things is incredibly important,” Mintz said. “People mistakenly think that events lead to feelings. In actuality, events lead to thoughts, which then lead to feelings. The more you are able to control your thoughts, the more you are able to control your stress.”

Deep breathing or diaphragmatic breathing is one of the fastest ways to reduce stress. When people become stressed, their breathing changes to quick, non-diaphragmatic breathing. Slowing breathing can significantly calm a person.

Source: University of Missouri

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