

Softer Success

Be more gentle with yourself

10 Ways to Reduce Stress and Prevent Burnout

1. Identify one source of negative stress in your day - before you can solve a problem you have to name it. Pinpoint one scenario or daily experience that routinely creates negative stress
2. Think of your brain as a battery - This simple metaphor will change the way you manage stress. When negative stress builds up it drains your battery. But when you check your battery charge and choose a recharge strategy you can course-correct before it leads to a mental health crisis
3. Identify your stress response - each of us responds differently to stress
4. Take 5 minutes to write down your feelings and behaviour under negative stress - for example are you overwhelmed, anxious, irritable, sad, worried, numb or do you want to run away? No one knows your stress response better than you and writing it down will help you detect patterns so you can get proactive at managing stress
5. Set aside 1 minute recovery time after a stressful meeting - you can build up to 5 minutes but the important thing is to begin. Instead of returning immediately to your work, take a short, brisk walk, which will activate your senses and help modify your breathing, or just a few minutes of deep breathing. Consciously building in a few minutes to help connect you to your thoughts, recharge and bounce back from any challenges
6. Observe your breathing when you open up your email in the morning - 80% of us hold our breath for short bursts of time while reading our emails, which disrupts our breathing and increases stress
7. Take one minute at the start of each day to pre-empt negative stress with a positive affirmation - an affirmation is a simple recharge strategy that helps you focus on the positive. Before you take on the day's demands take on a negative feeling and reframe it in your favor. For example if you feel judged by yourself or others for falling behind or not measuring up somehow, try 'I am able to do everything that needs to be done' or 'I am enough'
8. At the end of the day recall one moment that caused you stress and reframe it - reframing is the active and intentional shifting of your mindset. It's about pausing intentionally to take in the world through a different lens.
9. Take 10 minutes to journal or meditate before bed - To quiet the mind and prepare for sleep, try listing out what you are grateful for, reframing stressful situations in your day,

jotting down goals or to-do's for the next day or simply writing your thoughts and feelings (sometimes called a 'mind dump' This will help you clear our mind of mental clutter and unwanted ruminations.

10. Invite a friend or colleague for lunch or coffee or even a 'virtual ' coffee break - consider going deeper on a few connections you already have. Inviting someone you know to lunch and getting to know them in a deeper way is important for building human connections that optimize the brain function and it is good for your mental and physical well being.