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## TIPS AND TRICKS TO HELP YOU STRESS LESS

Stress. We all feel it. We all complain about it. And we probably just accept it as being the price we pay for living in today's hectic world.

While it's true that stress is probably unavoidable – whether it's caused by a traffic jam or a bigger challenge like a job loss or a chronic illness – it's also true that you can learn to deal with stress in a more healthy way. And that's important, because stress can wreak havoc on your health. The longer you're under stress, the worse it is for your physical well-being. Here are some things to try to help you manage stress.

- One of the first things you should do to manage stress is figure out what it is that stresses you out. Then, reflect on how your own behaviors or attitudes might be contributing to your stress. It might help to keep track of your stressors, how they make you feel, and what you did about them. You might begin to see patterns.
- Look at your stressors and ask yourself which of them you might be able to do away with. Is there constantly too much on your plate because you can't say no? Do you stay at a job that's eating away at you instead of looking for something new? If you have media overload, can you hit the "off" button?
- Take care of yourself. Try to stick with a healthy diet, get some exercise, and get enough sleep.
- Listen to yourself. If you tend to be negative, try to reframe your thoughts to be more positive. For instance, instead of "I'm so stupid! I can't believe I'm overdrawn at the bank," say "I made a mistake. I'll keep better track next time."
- Don't try to be perfect. Setting yourself up to meet unrealistic expectations does you no good.

## QUICK TAKES



### STRESS AND FOOD

Everyone has their own way of dealing with stressful, frightening, or otherwise unpleasant feelings. Some people may run ten miles to let off steam. Others might meditate or do yoga. Some people just like to talk things through with someone they trust.

But for many people, food is the first thing they reach for when overwhelmed with negative emotion. It's called emotional, or stress, eating. And if you're trying to maintain a healthy weight or lose some pounds, stress eating is not what you want to be doing. The fact that stress eaters typically crave the most unhealthy, fattening foods just adds to the challenge. These foods actually make the reward center in the brain light up, causing unwanted feelings to be relieved.

Until those feelings come back, of course. And, because we're human and because life is stressful sometimes, those feelings will inevitably come back. And so the cycle of stress eating continues.

The good news? There are ways to conquer stress eating. Identifying your feelings, looking for patterns in what triggers you, and learning ways to cope with and alleviate stress in your life will all help break the cycle.

## SOME STRESS QUICK FIXES

Dealing with stress as a big-picture life issue is one thing. Making the kinds of changes listed above will take time. But on a day-to-day basis, you can learn to focus on some of life's simple pleasures and give yourself a little time to enjoy them. Some ideas:

- Take deep breaths in and out. Feel your body start to relax.
- Get up and walk around — even if it's just moving from one room to another, it'll give you a needed break.
- Ask for a hug from a friend or loved one when you need it. Or pet a dog or cat. Small moments of connection can help.
- Listen to some favorite music, sing, or play an instrument.
- Take a bath. Don't forget the bubbles and soothing essential oils.
- Spend some time in nature.
- Consider taking up yoga or meditation.
- Laugh! Whether you're laughing at a comedian on TV, your cat's antics, or even yourself, laughter is a natural stress-buster.

Do a little experimenting. See what methods work for you. And then practice them. You may be surprised how these strategies can lessen the grip stress has on your life.

Sources:

American Psychological Association. *Managing stress for a healthy family*. <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/managing-stress.aspx> Accessed 6/11/18

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## BANANAS A LA ORANGE

MAKES 2 SERVINGS

This is a sweet but nutritious low-fat dessert! Make sure not to leave bananas in the pan too long, or they may not be firm in the center

### INGREDIENTS

- 2 medium, firm bananas, peeled, cut lengthwise
- 1/2 tablespoon trans-fat-free margarine
- 1 tablespoon light brown sugar
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1/8 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup fat-free frozen yogurt

### DIRECTIONS

1. Peel and cut bananas in half lengthwise. Melt margarine in a nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add brown sugar and lay the banana slices on top, cut side up. Cook undisturbed for 20 seconds.
2. Add orange juice and cinnamon. Cook for 10 seconds, then turn bananas carefully and cook for 45 to 60 seconds more, basting with the pan sauce.
3. Divide the bananas between two dessert plates, drizzling the sauce on top. Serve immediately, with a dollop of fat-free frozen yogurt.



### NUTRITIONAL INFORMATION

215 Calories  
3 g Protein  
3 g Fat  
1 g Saturated fat  
470 g Carbohydrate  
2 g Cholesterol  
4 g Dietary fiber  
76 mg Sodium