

Unit 8. Nicotine and your mental health

10 tips for managing stress and anxiety

Skills to “de-stress” and calm yourself work best when they’re practiced ahead of time, not just when the pressure’s on. Some may work better than others, it’s about finding the ones that work for you so you won’t think about reaching for a vape, smoke or other substance to manage.



1. Stop and breathe.

Conscious breathing is the body's natural antidote to stress. Pause what you're doing, and take a deep breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. Concentrate on the inhale and the exhale of your breath; it will help you calm down and think clearly.

2. Avoid over-scheduling.

If you're feeling stretched, consider cutting out an activity or two, choosing just the ones that are most important to you.

3. Be present.

Life can be overwhelming, especially when you get caught up in worrying about what's next. Instead, focus on what you can control in the present moment and try to stay in the moment.



4. Move your body.

Any form of exercise, from hitting the gym to yoga, can act as a stress reliever. When you exercise, your brain releases chemicals that make you feel good. Just walking 20 minutes a day or taking a few minutes to do a stretching routine can help!



5. Eat and drink well.

Good nutrition makes you healthier, keeps you alert through the day and keeps your mood steady. When you're stressed out, it's easy to eat on the run or eat junk food. Eating healthy and drinking lots of water will cut down the toxic effects of stress. Keep healthy snacks like fruit, trail mix and yogurt nearby, and don't skip meals.



6. Decaffeinate.

Caffeine can help you stay awake, but it also makes your body feel more tense, jittery and stressed. Cutting back on or gradually eliminating caffeinated products (like coffee, energy drinks, and soda) will make it easier for you to fall asleep and lessen your feelings of stress and anxiety.

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7. Get a good night's sleep.



If you get enough sleep, your body won't tolerate stress as well as it could. Go to sleep about the same time every night. Take power naps when you need them. When you get into bed, don't do homework, read, or use the phone, and don't solve your problems in bed. When you think about all the things that bother you, you have trouble falling asleep and wake up in the middle of the night to worry more. Give yourself plenty of time to think things through, make a list if you need to, and then set it aside! You can also try visualization before bed to relieve stress.

8. Reach out.

Share what you're going through with people who make you feel good about yourself and want to help you. If you're trying to quit nicotine, talk to your friends, family, teachers, school counsellors, and other important people in your life who support you and your decision to stop vaping/smoking.



9. Let some things go.

It's important to try to fix problems, but sometimes there's nothing you can do to change a problem, so don't waste your energy worrying about it. If you use your energy worrying about things you cannot change, you won't have enough left over to fix the things you can.



10. Make time for fun.

Build time into your schedule for activities you enjoy – read a good book, play with your pet, do a hobby, make art or music, spend time with positive people, or be in nature.