

4 Ways to Maintain Balance When Life Gets Hectic



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It seems as though the pace of life continues to gain speed. Constant events, deadlines, goals and to-do lists fill the calendar. This pace of life can become stressful. Unfortunately, stress is one of the primary causes of disease, unhappiness and anxiety. **When you are really busy, it's likely you don't have time for a shower, much less a massage or a vacation.** So, how do you make time for de-stressing? Let's get right to the point, because time is of the essence. Try any of the following actions to improve your ability to reduce stress, maintain balance and enhance resiliency. Each idea can be implemented daily with little time commitment.

1. Change the way you think.

Shift your focus to abundance rather than lack. Focus on what you have rather than **what you don't.** This simple mindset shift evokes gratitude and a sense of peace. We inherently fear failure and rejection. We worry about trying to control every outcome in our lives. We compare ourselves to other people, and we believe that we are always behind. As easy as it is to compare ourselves to others, it really is something to avoid. Each person has his or her own challenges, feelings of lack and bouts of unhappiness. We all have our own story; **each is unique and different.** It's O.K. to be content with where you are right now and be grateful for what you have in the present.

Action: Start a gratitude journal.

For one week, each night before bed, write down three things for which you feel grateful, proud, happy or content. Note how these things came into your life. At the end of the week, assess how **you feel.** It's likely a mood shift may have occurred, and you feel less stressed.

2. Take a break.

In the midst of an overwhelming schedule, a selfish break can feel irresponsible. However, a short five- to 10-minute break will clear the mind, help with fatigue and provide a much-needed pause during a busy day. If possible, go for a short walk outdoors. Nature provides grounding energy, and movement improves blood flow and produces mood-enhancing hormones. Better yet, pair regular breaks with a daily bout of exercise. Maintaining a consistent exercise program, even when life is hectic, will enhance your physical and emotional abilities to deal with stress.

Action: Walk in the present.

In the next hour, take a five-minute break for a walk. Notice your surroundings and pay attention to how your body feels. Take inventory of how you feel prior to the walk and again after the walk.

3. Be a superhero.

Physical activity, smiling, power postures and deep breathing are quick fixes for stress-related physical symptoms. Our bodies display stress in external ways—headaches, gastrointestinal issues, sleeplessness, general aches and pains can often be attributed to **stress. Even if you don't experience severe symptoms, it's likely you have experienced** fatigue, general tightness around the neck and shoulders, and a slouchy, tired posture. You can trick your body into feeling fewer physical symptoms of stress by changing your physical posture. Stand up straight, align the spine and smile. This power posture is an instant boost.

Action: Pose like a superhero.

During moments of stress or general tiredness, stand up and place your hands on your hips. Pretend you are a superhero and puff up your chest. Take five deep breaths. Fill your lungs and belly to capacity. Next, smile for 10 seconds. The simple act of smiling sends a positive signal to the brain and allows the body to relax a bit. This power posture can be helpful before presentations and difficult conversations, and for those times when you just feel overwhelmed.

4. Practice mindfulness.

When life is overwhelming, your mind naturally spins with multiple thoughts. Focusing your thoughts on the past can create feelings of regret and depression and focusing on the future can foster feelings of anxiety. The only place we can be without worry is truly in the present. That means letting go of expectations of anything except what happens right now. Most of us have future deadlines, goals and ambitions. Being mindful in the moment does not mean that we let go of those things. It simply means we turn our attention to the task at hand, and really place our focus and energy with it. For some, mindfulness is being fully immersed in work. Taking the time to eat slowly, taste and

enjoy food is a form of mindfulness. Paying attention to how your body feels during movement is mindfulness. Mindfulness might also take the shape of paying attention to the breath, something that occurs all day long without you giving it a second thought. Whatever form mindfulness takes for you, the point is that it can be done anytime, anywhere, and it provides immediate results. In as little as 60 seconds, your body and mind can become calm, and a sense of balance can be restored.

Action: Breathe.

Assume a comfortable position with a tall posture, standing or seated. Set a timer for one to three minutes. Close your eyes and pay attention to your breath. Follow the inhale, follow the exhale. Try to inhale for the same duration as you exhale. Notice how you feel before this exercise and after.

It takes conscious effort and commitment to maintain a healthy and balanced lifestyle. These four ideas are quick and efficient ways to navigate stress and maintain balance when life gets hectic.