

# 10 TIPS FOR MANAGING STRESS



By: James Mast, LPC

Stress is a catch-all term that is often used to describe worry, irritation, disgust, fatigue, sadness, and other uncomfortable feelings. Your experience of stress is highly influenced by your internal world and external circumstances. In other words, stress is often unique because people are unique. Because stress isn't defined by any one feeling or problem, it is important to find a stress-management approach that work best for you. The following is a series of strategies for reducing stress.

**1) Feeling overwhelmed?** Ask yourself this question: what can I put down? Stress is sometimes a signal that you are over-extended in life. Ridding yourself of certain tasks or responsibilities can create space for self-care.

**2) Take a body-based approach to stress management.** Let's face it, stress is downright painful sometimes. Muscle tension, headaches, and GI problems often occur in periods of stress. And body tension leads to more stress. Try short-circuiting the stress cycle by doing something to make your body feel good. Go for a walk, get a

massage, or take a hot bath.

**3) Don't believe everything you think.** Stress can lead to thoughts that are overly negative or even scary. I think of these thoughts as "stink'n think'n." You may not be able to change your thoughts, but you can choose the way you respond to them. Giving yourself a little room to be weird and not-at-your-best when stressed is an act of self-care.

**4) Feel your feelings.** People can invest huge amounts of energy trying to avoid uncomfortable feelings like sadness, disgust, irritation, or boredom. It is important to remember that feelings tend to be temporary. So, the next time you feel lousy, remember the old saying: *this too shall pass.*

**5) Reach out for support.** Telling your closest friends or family about problems can create opportunities for both comfort and guidance. Conversely, internalizing stress often leads to more serious problems. What do stress and mushrooms have in common? They both grow in the dark.

**6) Make a list.** Write down all of the problems on your mind and mark which ones you can solve by taking an action right now. Also, mark which problems can't be solved by an action right now. If you can do something about a problem on the list, do it. If you can't do anything about it, let it go.

**7) Harness the power of gratitude.** Take a moment to write a note to somebody you appreciate.

When we lift others up, we lift ourselves up too.

**8) Reduce your screen time.** As smartphone use has increased globally, so have mental health issues like anxiety and depression. Be intentional about creating screen-free time in your day.

**9) Spend time in nature.** Studies show that spending time outside has significant and wide-ranging health

benefits. The outdoors can quiet the mind and soothe the soul. Explore local parks and other outdoor areas to discover what remedies the natural world has to offer.

**10) Create a personal mantra.** Advertising companies have long known the power of a good slogan. Nike says, "Just do it." Apple tells you to "Think different." L'Oreal wants you to buy their products "Because

you're worth it." Think of the words that you most need to hear. Say those words to yourself every day. Fasten those words to your wall at home and at work.

For many people, the holiday season brings a lot of stress. The same is true of the months leading up to a political election. Since both are fast approaching, be mindful of the ways in which you are caring for yourself!

*James Mast is a Licensed Professional Counselor at Penn Foundation. His clinical work focuses on helping individuals, couples, and families understand and cope with a variety of mental health issues. He specializes in supporting children who are at high risk for hospitalization due to the severity of their behaviors. James completed his Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Master's degree in Clinical Psychology, with a concentration in Trauma Studies, at Eastern University.*

*Founded in 1955, Penn Foundation is a non-profit organization providing innovative services to address the mental health and substance abuse treatment needs of individuals in our community. With headquarters in Sellersville, Bucks County, and satellite offices in Colmar, Souderton, and Pottstown, Penn Foundation employs 440 compassionate professionals who serve more than 19,000 children, adolescents, and adults each year with integrated, holistic care designed to meet the unique needs of each person. Penn Foundation believes strongly in the resiliency of the human spirit and is committed to instilling hope, inspiring change, and building community. For more information, visit [www.PennFoundation.org](http://www.PennFoundation.org).*



**PENN FOUNDATION**  
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH SERVICES

215.257.6551

[www.pennfoundation.org](http://www.pennfoundation.org)

Instilling hope. Inspiring change. Building community.

Innovative mental health services and substance abuse treatment to people of all ages

Services for children, adolescents, and adults that address a variety of life challenges

Programs that can help you make healthy changes and achieve your life goals

