

FEATURE ARTICLE

# 5 Simple Ways to Combat Stress in Your Daily Life

By Erika Schwartz, MD



According to world renowned hormone and lifestyle expert Dr. Erika Schwartz, living a stress-free life starts with your small day to day actions.

## Put the stressor in an imaginary drawer and shut it!

We are accustomed to believing we must work out every problem, struggling with it until we find a solution. Some problems do not have solutions, at least for a while, and rather than stressing yourself out when there is no answer to be found, give yourself a break and move on.

## Take a deep breath out!

A good friend of mine once gave me a great tape by an Eastern master. I listened to it a few times. I knew I would never become a yogi, but I learned an important piece of advice from the tape. When I feel overwhelmed, I stop and take a deep breath out! Somehow, when you breathe in, you are bringing into your body all the stress and worry from the outside world. When you breathe out, all the stuff you held in just dissipates from you. It may not make my problems go away, but my load becomes much lighter. Try it. Take three breaths in through your nose into your lungs and belly, counting to five. Hold for the count of five and let them out through your mouth to the count of seven. See how you feel.

## Pause, even for a second!

In tennis, the difference between an average and a good tennis player is timing. A split-second delay allows you to focus better and see where the ball is going, how to better hit it and how to direct your shot. Take the split-second delay concept and apply it to your life. Before reacting in a stressful situation, after you take a deep breath out, stop for a few seconds. In these few seconds, you can consider if it is worth reacting to,

or if there are better ways to deal with the situation. The split-second delay allows you to become aware of yourself and your surroundings. The message is: Don't react immediately, because you may not need to react at all. I'm not recommending you start intellectualizing everything and lose the spontaneity that makes you unique and life interesting; just stop for a split second, and think about what you really want to do. As we age we learn that drama is a bad thing in our lives. It creates negative energy and stress, which release cortisol and other destructive hormones. So less drama, less stress, better health.

## Stop feeling stuck in the past!

When something happens that you have no control over, let go of it! Be sad, mourn the situation, the person, but holding onto it or trying to make believe it did not happen, or wishing it hadn't happened, will only make your stress levels go up. I find many male patients stuck in their youth. They believe their best days are behind them — high school football, college swimming, their 20s. If you believe the best is in your past, then that will be true. Instead, look at how you can make the present better. Don't miss today by wasting precious energy on yesterday.

## Take one step at a time!

I think my life is overwhelming most of the time because I find myself biting off more than I can chew. I don't know how to say no. Unfortunately, I found out the hard way that if I do less, I accomplish more and leave a lot less disappointment behind. Start saying no once in a while. You'll stay focused and move ahead faster. Give up on doing 20 things at once. Think of your life as a stove. Move everything you don't need to do today to the back burner. See how much better and less cluttered your life becomes.

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