

Stress Busters Guide

Did you know that stress could be one of the most important ingredients in success? *Good* stress that is. It's hard to believe that there is such a thing as good stress, but it's true. When the body experiences elements of good stress it releases the hormone *epinephrine*, which increases attention. When the body experiences bad stress, it releases *cortisol*, the hormone associated with negative emotions.

So, why not use the following ideas to harness the power of positive stress?

1. *Be optimistic.* Instead of imagining a negative outcome, try to imagine a positive outcome. This can help you see solutions you might not have thought about before.
2. *Keep things in perspective.* Often, when we feel stressed about something we over-emphasize the small and unimportant things that go wrong. Don't let the little things bring you down.
3. *Keep a sense of humor.* Did you know that children on average smile 300 times a day and adults only smile 20 times a day? Childhood is also a time when an extraordinary amount of creativity and learning occur. So think the way a child thinks; if you have to do something you don't want to, try to make a game of it to make it more enjoyable.
4. *Study!* When you feel confident about what you know, your negative stress levels decrease. Don't procrastinate your studying; that is a sure way to bring on the bad stress.
5. *Let go of the things you can't control.* Don't waste mental energy thinking about the things that are out of your control to change. Focus on the things that are within your reach.
6. *Be prepared.* Whether you are rehearsing for a presentation or preparing for a written exam, prepare what you are going to say or write. If you will be speaking, then say aloud your presentation or answers to oral exam questions. If you will be writing an essay exam, write sample answers for extra practice. Whatever you're preparing for, rehearsals will increase the good stress when you actually have to perform the task.
7. *Relax.* Holding your jaw tight or clenching your fists will only increase your overall stress level. Take deep breaths and focus on your tasks in a relaxed manner.