



Laughing at stress with five to thrive



1. Get your head right

Most of our stress is caused by the way we choose to look at things. The thoughts we think, the beliefs we hold and the words we speak, all combine to 'program' the way we see the world. When we change these, we change the meaning we give to events and the stress we experience.

- ▶ Don't ignore the cold hard realities of life but **learn to think in more positive ways**:
"Now that this has happened, how can I live my best life?"
- ▶ Be inspired by **uplifting stories** and good people.
- ▶ Tear up your "**blame list**".
- ▶ **Be a carrier of good news**. Limit criticism, cynicism and complaining.
- ▶ As an exercise in gratitude, use our **Six of the Best** before going to sleep each night.
- ▶ **Speak helpful words**: "We can handle it." "We'll find ways to do it."
- ▶ Respond to the question: "How are you today?" with "Fantastic" or "Turbo-charged" or "On top of the world, it's less crowded up there."

2. Manage your moods.

Moods are affected by our biology and mental health. Our natural biological (circadian) rhythms account for peaks and troughs. For example, moods tend to trough in the afternoon, late evening, throughout the night and in the early morning. In contrast, moods tend to peak during late morning, early afternoon and early evening. Other factors include how much sleep we've had, exercise, food and our state of health. Mental health involves how we use the power of our mind to interpret what is happening around us.



- ▶ **Try to be more aware of your moods** and use your peaks and troughs wisely. For example, avoid problem solving during low moods.
- ▶ **Improve your alertness and energy** by eating protein and slow-digesting foods. Limit refined carbohydrates (white bread, cakes, biscuits, sweets etc) which can cause sleepiness and mood troughs. (See "Handy Hints for Health" notes for more ideas.)
- ▶ Just 5 - 10 minutes of **brisk walking** can boost your energy for 90 minutes.
- ▶ **Use easy mood lifters**: twirl, sing, dance, hum, whistle, pray, take a shower. Deep breathing (see notes). Connect with nature. Be amused, smile, laugh. Decorate with living plants, colours and pictures. Watch a few minutes of a funny DVD. Phone a friend.

3. Believe in yourself

How we feel about ourselves can affect everything we do in our lives.

- ▶ **Challenge limiting beliefs** such as “I’ve been like it all my life.”
- ▶ Accept mistakes and learn from them.
- ▶ Give and receive praise and compliments.
- ▶ **Don’t put yourself down.**
- ▶ Give yourself a wave and a smile in the mirror.
- ▶ Celebrate your own intelligence:



“How intelligent are you?” is the wrong question to ask. The right question is “How are you intelligent?” This question acknowledges that there are a variety of ways to express intelligence and that no scale could ever measure this. (The Element – how finding your passion changes everything. Ken Robinson, 2009)

4. Make time for you

You are your greatest asset. If you can’t look after yourself you can’t look after others. Make time for yourself to relax or do something that re-energises and revitalises.

- ▶ **Challenge unrealistic expectations** of your own and from other people.
- ▶ **Learn to say “no”** before agreeing to do something, ask yourself: Have I got the time? Have I got the energy? Have I got the skills? Do I want to do it?
- ▶ Connect with important sources of **help and supportive influences**: Take advantage of any assistance or respite that is available.
- ▶ Know your “high energy” times and try to use them wisely.
- ▶ **Avoid comparing yourself with others**. Just because someone else can “do it all”, doesn’t mean you can.
- ▶ Replace the word “should” with “could”.

5. Find your funny bone

We need to recover and re-energise our sense of humour because we can become so serious about what we’re doing. We forget to be a little bit funny or humorous. (People have told jokes in terrible times to keep their spirits up.)

- ▶ **Be open to humour**—hunt out funny DVDs, books, comedy shows, cartoons, jokes, stories and funny props to amuse yourself and others.



For more ideas read our book **You won’t die laughing!** and visit our website for jokes and other free information. Join our Famous Friday Funnies by sending an email to shayne@docfunny.com or putting your form in the box on our book table.

Patricia Cameron-Hill & Shayne Yates
www.chy.com.au
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