

Top 10 Stress Management Techniques for Students

Most students experience significant amounts of stress, and this stress can take a significant toll on health, happiness, and grades. For example, a study by the American Psychological Association (APA) found that teens report stress levels similar to that of adults, meaning that they are experiencing significant levels of chronic stress, that they feel their levels of stress generally exceed their ability to cope effectively. Roughly 30% report feeling overwhelmed, depressed, or sad because of it.¹

Stress can affect health-related behaviors like sleep patterns, diet, and exercise as well, taking a larger toll.

An NYU study found that much of high school students' stress originates from school and activities and that this chronic stress can persist into college years and lead to academic disengagement and mental health problems.

Given that nearly half of survey respondents reported completing three hours of homework per night in addition to their full day of school work and extracurriculars for many of them, this is understandable.²

Common Causes of Student Stress

Common sources of student stress include:

- School
- Homework
- Extracurricular activities
- Social challenges
- Transitions (graduating, moving out, living independently)
- Relationships
- Work

High school students face the intense competitiveness of taking challenging courses, amassing impressive extracurriculars, studying and acing the SATs and ACTs, and deciding important and life-changing plans for their future, all while navigating the social challenges that are inherent in the high school experience.

Once they are finally accepted to the college of their dreams (or one they're happy to go to), the stress continues as they need to make new friends, handle a more challenging workload, be without parental support in many instances, and navigate the stresses that come with more

independent living and making choices that will hopefully lead to a career. And relationships always add an extra layer of potential stress.

Many students feel a sense of needing to relieve stress, but with all of the activities and responsibilities that fill a student's schedule, it's sometimes difficult to find the time to try new stress relievers to help dissipate that stress.

That's why we've compiled the following list of stress relievers that are most appropriate for students: relatively easy, quick, and relevant to a student's life and types of stress. They'll help you to function at your best, and enjoy the journey as you continue to develop your skills and abilities.

1.Sleep

Students, with their packed schedules, are notorious for missing sleep. Unfortunately, operating in a sleep-deprived state puts you at a distinct disadvantage. You're less productive, you may find it more difficult to learn, and you may even be a hazard behind the wheel.

Don't neglect your sleep schedule. Aim to get at least 8 hours a night and take power naps when you need them.

2. Visualization

Using guided imagery to reduce stress is easy and effective. Visualizations can help you calm down, detach from what's stressing you, and turn off your body's stress response.

You can also use visualizations to prepare for presentations and score higher on tests by vividly seeing yourself performing just as you'd like to.

3.Exercise

One of the healthiest ways to blow off steam is to get a regular exercise program going. Students can work exercise easily into their schedules by doing yoga in the morning, walking or biking to campus, or reviewing for tests with a friend while walking on a treadmill at the gym.

Starting now and keeping a regular exercise practice throughout your lifetime can help you live longer and enjoy your life more.

4. Breathing

When your body is experiencing a stress response, you're often not thinking as clearly as you could be. A quick way to calm down is to practice breathing exercises. These can be done virtually anywhere to relieve stress in minutes, and are especially effective for reducing anxiety before or even during tests, as well as during other times when stress feels overwhelming.

5. Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

Another great stress reliever that can be used during tests as well as before bed (to prepare for sleep), or at other times when stress has you physically "wound up," is something called Progressive Muscle Relaxation, or PMR. This technique involves tensing and relaxing all muscles until the body is completely relaxed.

With practice, you can learn to release stress from your body in seconds. This can be particularly helpful for students because it can be adapted to help relaxation efforts before sleep for deeper sleep, something students can always use, or even to relax and reverse test-induced panic before or during a test.

6. Music

A convenient stress reliever that has also shown many cognitive benefits, music can help you to relieve stress and either calm yourself down or stimulate your mind as your situation warrants. Students can harness the benefits of music by playing classical music while studying, playing upbeat music to 'wake up' mentally, or relaxing with the help of their favorite slow melodies.

This can be helpful while studying, but can also be a great strategy to use while walking around on campus or gearing up for tests.

7. Organization

It's a fact that clutter causes stress, and can decrease productivity and even cost you money. Many students live in a cluttered place and even have cluttered study areas, and this can have negative effects on grades. One way to reduce the amount of stress that you experience as a student is to keep a minimalist, soothing study area that's free of distractions and clutter.

This can keep stress levels low while studying, can save time in finding lost items, and keep roommate relationships more positive. It can also help students gain a positive feeling about their study area, which can help with test prep and encourage more studying. It's worth the effort.

8. Healthy Eating

You may not realize it, but your diet can either boost your brain power or sap you of mental energy. While a healthy diet isn't generally thought of as a stress management technique or a study aid, it can actually function as both.

Improving your diet can keep you from experiencing diet-related mood swings, light-headedness and more.

9. Self-Hypnosis

Students often find themselves "getting very sleepy" (like when they pull all-nighters), but—all kidding aside—self-hypnosis can be an effective stress management tool and a powerful productivity tool as well.

With it, you can help yourself release tension from your body and stress from your mind, and plant the seeds of success in your subconscious mind with the power of autosuggestion.

10. Positive Thinking and Affirmations

Did you know that optimists actually experience better circumstances, in part, because their way of thinking helps to *create* better circumstances in their lives? It's true! The habit of optimism and positive thinking can bring better health, better relationships, and, yes, better grades.

Learn how to train your brain for more positive self-talk and a brighter future with affirmations and other tools for optimism. (Discover if you're an optimist or a pessimist.) You can also learn the limitations to affirmations and the caveats of positive thinking so you aren't working against yourself.

After you read:

1. Which of these techniques have you known about?
2. Have you used any of these techniques in the past?
When? What were the circumstances?
3. Which of these techniques would you like to learn more about? Why?