



MANITOBA TRUCKING ASSOCIATION

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Reducing Stress and Managing Health

Stress, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), can be defined as a state of worry or mental tension caused by a difficult situation. Stress is a natural human response that prompts us to address challenges and threats in our lives. Everyone experiences stress to some degree. The way we respond to stress, however, makes a big difference to our overall well-being.

Stress management and coping strategies are critical for health living. Wellness in both personal and professional aspects boosts other health functions. Stress triggers biological changes in the body, releasing hormones, increasing heart rate, and potentially causing unpleasant physical impacts like digestive issues, insomnia, muscle tension, headaches and more.

Reducing stress is essential for maintaining your physical and mental well-being. Here are some effective ways to reduce stress in your life:

Deep Breathing

Practicing deep breathing techniques, like diaphragmatic breathing or mindfulness meditation, can help calm your mind and lower stress levels.

Limit Screen Time

Excessive screen time, especially on social media, can increase stress. Consider taking regular digital detox breaks. Many phones are equipped with “digital wellbeing settings” or “parental controls,” which can be used to forcefully limit your own screen time if you so wish. If you would prefer to monitor your screen time, start checking how many hours you spend on your phone per day. Make goals that suit the lifestyle you want to lead. If you are spending 2 hours a day on Facebook, consider choosing a goal and setting a time, and engaging in a different activity once you’ve reached your set time limit.

Exercise

Regular physical activity, such as walking, jogging, swimming, or yoga, can help reduce stress by releasing endorphins, which are natural mood lifters. Choose an exercise that you enjoy. Choosing an exercise that you dread can actually stress you out more!

Time Management

Organize your day with a to-do list and prioritize tasks. Effective time management can help reduce the feeling of being overwhelmed. Having an agenda, using your phone calendars, planning your day, and setting alarms can all help increase your control of your time management.

Get Adequate Sleep

Ensure you get enough sleep each night. Lack of sleep can lead to increased stress and decreased resilience. The amount of sleep each person requires per night varies between people. However, the general recommendation for adult is 7 hours or more per night.

Healthy Diet

Eat a balanced diet with plenty of fruits, vegetables, protein, and whole grains. Avoid excessive caffeine and sugar, as they can contribute to anxiety and enhance stress responses. Excessive alcohol consumption can also increase stress and anxiety. Healthy diets are about balance. Moderation is key.

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Stay Hydrated

Dehydration can contribute to stress and tension, so drink enough water throughout the day. Find a water bottle with a motivating phrase, or with times on the side to increase your water consumption! Remember, if you are thirsty, you are already dehydrated.

Social Support

Spend time with friends and loved ones. Social connections can provide emotional support and alleviate stress. Send a text, or pickup the phone to get started!

Mindfulness and Relaxation Techniques

Practices like progressive muscle relaxation, guided imagery, or aromatherapy can help you relax and reduce stress. Are you clenching your jaw right now? Are your shoulders tense?

Set Realistic Goals

Avoid setting unrealistic expectations for yourself, and break larger tasks into smaller, manageable steps.

Nature and Fresh Air

Spending time outdoors, even for a short walk, can reduce stress and improve your mood. Schedule time to go to the park or join a community garden to increase your time outdoors.

Hobbies and Leisure Activities

Engage in hobbies or activities you enjoy, which can provide a break from stressors. Take a class in pottery, join a sports team, try a new recipe, the possibilities are endless!

Positive Thinking

Challenge negative thoughts and replace them with more positive and constructive ones. Positive affirmations, and practising gratitude directly combat intrusive negative thoughts.

Learn to Say No

Avoid overcommitting yourself, and don't be afraid to say no to additional responsibilities when you're feeling overwhelmed. If you struggle to say no, try saying, "now is not a good time."

Professional Help

If stress becomes overwhelming or persistent, consider seeking support from a mental health professional, therapist, or counselor. Your workplace may have an Employee Assistance Program. There are also many free resources in Manitoba that offer support to individuals in every situation. Please see the Mental Health Resources for Winnipeg provided by the Canadian Mental Health Association: Mental Health Resources Guide for Winnipeg (cmha.ca) or visit [Shared Health](#) for access to a variety of resources serving Manitoba.

Laugh

Laughter has been shown to reduce stress, so watch a funny movie, read a humorous book, or spend time with people who make you laugh.

Music and Art

Listening to music or engaging in creative activities like drawing, painting, or playing a musical instrument can be therapeutic. It is proven that engaging in art and music produces dopamine and oxytocin. Both hormones reduce cortisol and aid the brain in uplifting mood.

Simplify Your Life

Declutter your physical space and simplify your commitments and obligations to reduce stress. When was the last time you wore that sweater? Could your shoes be better organized? Take one step at a time!

Remember that what works best for reducing stress can vary from person to person. It's important to try different strategies to discover what works for you. Additionally, it may be helpful to combine multiple approaches to create a stress-reduction plan that suits your needs.



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