

BARBARASHANNON

How to Reduce Your Stress Level Instantly

We're talking about every day, at work, reading the news, taking care of the kids, responding to customers, preparing for the pitch, fixing other people's messes, brain-on-fire stress.

Here's what to do...

Decide to STOP it! You can control your feelings. You can manage what goes on in your mind. You can learn to recognize when stress is beyond an acceptable level, Just STOP it!...and take some simple steps to de-escalate your brain.

Recognize the sources:

Biggest culprit - A false sense of urgency. Most things really can wait. Really. Try it out by time boxing. Plan to do it when it's on your schedule.

Second biggest culprit - An exaggerated sense of consequences. Stop and think about what is the worst that can happen. Then schedule it for the best time.

Time box your week so that you know in advance when you're taking action and when you have windows to handle the urgent things. That way you can say, "I will take care of that on Tuesday at 3:00." And then do that.

Delegate. Ask the bringer of the stressfully urgent need the following question, "What have you already tried?" And send them on their way to try harder and let you know if they get stuck.

Get hyper-focused on your vision, your why and your highest value work. When you do that, there is far less space for fire drills and you will naturally avoid taking on the urgent over the important.

Get rid of physical tension by breathing deeply, walking rhythmically, focusing on grounding images such as the outdoors, a child, your partner, your garden, your pet, or your breath. If you don't have any of these things in your life, it might be time to make some changes. If you don't have kids, you can walk. You may not have a pet, but you can breathe deeply. You can leave your desk, go to your car and take a quiet moment to re-group.

Get organized! Nothing is more stressful than a hot mess! So don't be one. "" = Block time on the weekend if you must to organize your desk put important actions on the calendar and post your top priorities on a big piece of paper where you can see it every day.

Recognize the negative Nelly voice for what it is...a non-reality based newsreel about why you should stay in bed and give up. Say "thank you for sharing" and recommit to focusing on what's real, what's worthy of gratitude, what matters, what you are good at, what you love, and what you can control.

Stop using anxiety words. Even in your own mind. Just stop! "I'm worried about..." "but what if ... " "I can't because..." Words are powerful creators of emotions so use them thoughtfully. Instead try, "I know I can..."

"What I'm good at is..." "I'm the kind of person who..." Write your own script. Never let Negative Nelly write it for you.

Use anxiety to fuel your drive. Turn anxiety into energy, enthusiasm and excitement. When interviewers ask an Olympic athlete if they were "nervous" before their event, they say, "No, I was excited! I'm so excited to be here. I'm excited to be part of this." Steal their words. They work.

Figure out what next step you can do to get momentum towards something you care about. Even a small step that gets you closer to your goal will ease your stress and give you a sense of control over your world.

Practice mastery level de-stressing - *Let go, and take control.* We all breathe a sigh of relief when we feel we are able to direct our destiny. And we all benefit from releasing our grip on our picture of "the way we want things to be". Step one - Let go. Take a deep breath and rebalance your mind and your physical energy. Allow for a solution other than the one you are attached to. Then take a small positive step towards your highest value goal. With even a small step, the next step will appear.

Now breathe! Nobody died. Tomorrow is another day!