

8. Stressbusting: Ideas from Jane Revell's talk "Resourcing Yourself for Optimum Learning"

Contributed by Wendy Foster

As we all know, you can't change other people to suit yourself. You have to find ways to get along with what's out there. Basically, Jane's underlying concept of managing stress successfully involves strategies you implement to pull yourself together beginning with the simplest of tips like breathing deeply or repeating a positive affirmation. It can be as simple as saying over and over to yourself something like, "Every day and in every way I'm getting better and better".

We all know that megastress can lead to illness. Here's what happens: You are under pressure to get a lot done, so you speed up, work intensively and relentlessly for long periods of time without seeming to tire, and you might even talk faster as well as eat faster. This high energy output leads to irritability and confrontational behavior. You might have physical symptoms like heartburn, migraines, insomnia and an increased need for comfort in the form of alcohol, food and cigarettes. All this is followed by a bout of low energy with warning signs like fuzzy thinking, anxiety and deep tiredness, or even a heart incident and severe depression.

Jane has compiled an incredibly practical list of ten stressbusting strategies that can be realistically implemented into our lives. You might want to rearrange the order to suit your personal needs and preferences.

1. Breathe deeply, meaning an abdominal breath with breathing in as the belly distends and breathing out as the belly contracts. This is best done while lying on your back with your knees bent.
2. Exercise and stretch, even if it's only arm rotation at the workplace, but preferably some exercise for 30 minutes a day.
3. Meditation, visualisations, positive affirmations. You might try using a designated object or image (mandala) or word (mantra) to focus your thoughts. You can try meditative music.

4. Rest, meaning try to get plenty of quality sleep. Try catnaps if your schedule and body rhythm allow that.
5. Water. Drink LOTS of it. Get into water - preferably cold water.
6. Eat healthy food, More zest foods (fresh fruits and vegetables, beans and grains, fish) and fewer zonk foods (sugary and fatty foods, processed foods).
7. Shout. If you want to, that is. Like a volcano venting. Preferable to shout out of earshot of others. I have shouted obscenities at the herring gulls on a lonely beach and they seemed to like it. Me too.
8. Talk kindly to yourself. Ever heard this one? Give me the grace to change the things I can, to accept the things I cannot change and the wisdom to know the difference.
9. Live in the present. The past is history. The future is a mystery, but the now is a gift which is why it is called the present.
10. Laugh, smile. Preferably at yourself. Try it in the mirror every morning.

Jane Revell has worked as an English language teacher and teacher-trainer throughout Europe and Latin America since the early 1970s. She has run a teaching theatre in three different countries and is an examiner for the Cambridge teaching exams. She is also a Master Practitioner and a Certified Trainer of NLP (Neuro-Linguistic Programming) for INLPTA (the International NLP Trainers Association) and runs NLP courses in the UK and abroad. She also does stress management, presentation skills and interpersonal skills training and is a practising counsellor and hypnotherapist. She has written many textbooks and books for teachers in the field of English language teaching – most notably *Buzz*, *Cross Country* and *Connect* – as well as children's programmes for the BBC World Service.