

6 BASIC SELF-CARE TIPS FOR WOMEN TO REDUCE STRESS AND IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH

Many women feel under a lot of pressure as a result of juggling work, family and social obligations - as well as maintaining their physical appearance and attending to the needs of others, usually above their own.

As a result, women are more prone to stress and anxiety than ever before. However, there are actions everyone can do to reduce stress and improve our mental health. Here are just a few strategies that can make all the difference.

1. Understand your triggers and how to avoid them

Learning and understanding what sets off negative emotions can be a challenging but valuable part of self-care. While it is important to recognise your triggers, it is also important to learn what steps you can take in order to avoid them or how to deal with them when you can't avoid them.

This includes being aware of situations that make you uncomfortable, developing strategies to cope with stress and anxiety, engaging in calming activities like deep breathing or meditation, and creating a safe space where you can feel comfortable enough to express yourself without judgement.

By recognising what causes triggers, women can begin creating an environment that supports their own self-care and well-being.

2. Create a support network of family and friends

When facing a difficult situation, having family and friends in your support network can be vital. A support system of people who you trust and care about not only provides valuable emotional support but also helps to remind you that you are not alone, there are other women out there, like you, who are facing similar issues.

Taking the time to nurture relationships with spouses, parents, siblings, colleagues, and close friends is essential for developing strong bonds of trust that you can draw upon in your time of need. Knowing that someone is listening to your concerns and cheering you on will often provide the assurance needed to take on life's challenges.

Reaching out for help when needed is so important, never stay quiet and bottle it up as this can only lead to more negativity in the long term. Creating a supportive network with family and friends will provide a great source of strength during times of struggle.

3. Exercise regularly and eat a healthy diet

Regular exercise and a healthy diet are both essential for maintaining a healthy body and



mind. Consistent physical activity not only helps strengthen the body but also increases endorphins in a woman's body which can improve mood and reduce stress levels. Eating balanced meals made with nutrient-packed ingredients such as fruits and vegetables can provide the energy needed to power through a workout and reduce fatigue throughout the day.

Proper nutrition can help you feel better emotionally and mentally, boost energy levels, and improve your overall well-being. Nutrients from our food also help stimulate the production of specific hormones, such as serotonin, which plays a crucial role in regulating mood.

Women tend to be more prone to anaemia (iron deficiency) than men, and this in turn can increase risk of anxiety, depression and other mental health problems, as well as causing symptoms like tiredness and headaches. The best sources of iron in the diet are red meat, beans and pulses, nuts, dried fruit, fortified breakfast cereals, wholegrains and dark leafy greens. A good amount of Vitamin C is also essential for helping both to absorb iron and plays a key role in building resilience to stress. Make sure to get plenty of purple, green and red fruits and vegetables.

4. Get enough sleep

A good night's sleep is essential for your physical and mental health. Skimping on sleep leads to fatigue, lack of productivity and irritability that can easily be avoided with just a little extra rest. Additionally, having a regular sleep schedule helps when trying to get quality shut-eye and also boosts your energy levels throughout the day.

Creating a night-time routine, avoiding caffeine later in the afternoon, investing in blackout curtains, or taking an Epsom salt bath before bedtime all may help promote better sleep hygiene. Getting enough rest not only keeps us feeling recharged but also supports our immune system and cognitive functions.

5. Taking breaks

Taking breaks during long periods of work or studying can be extremely beneficial for a woman's mental and physical health. They help to alleviate stress, recharge energy levels, increase productivity,

and make you more creative. But taking a break doesn't have to mean a total disruption from what you're working on – even just a few minutes away from the task can give you a window to clear your head and come back with fresh ideas.

Including short breaks during your work often means you're more productive than sticking it out at the same task for extended amounts of time. Listening to music, chatting with others, making yourself a snack or having a cup of tea can help you relax and reset when taking a break.

6. Find an activity that relaxes you

Taking time for yourself to rest and relax is an important part of staying healthy and feeling balanced. Women are often in charge of a lot of things and a lot of people so finding an activity that can help you decompress from the daily grind and recenter your thoughts can be a great way to step out of chaos, find peace, and allow yourself some much-needed time alone.

Finding activities that bring you joy, whether it's taking a walk in nature or playing a fun game with friends, can be a great way to reduce stress and increase your overall sense of well-being. Whatever activity you choose, make sure it uplifts your spirits and helps you relax!

Remember, managing stress is an individual process. Everyone has different triggers, methods of avoidance and relaxation. What works for one person might not work for another. However, understanding your triggers and creating a support network can help you develop effective coping strategies to manage the stress in your life. Whether it's practising mindfulness, taking breaks or talking with friends and family, it's important to take care of yourself and recognise when it's time to step back and reset. It may seem tough at first, but with consistency and determination, you'll find that you have access to an array of tools to keep your stress under control. After all, taking small steps today leads to lasting progress tomorrow.

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