



Reducing stress: 5 steps to streamline your to-dos

Just about any stress management tip list you scan will guide you to get enough sleep, eat nutritious foods, move your body, and take time to relax and connect with people you enjoy. For many of us, that sounds great – if only we had the time.

This worksheet will help you determine where you can find more time. Even 15 minutes here or there can add up to a stress-reducing difference.

- 1** Write down 5-7 of your responsibilities or commitments. If you need help narrowing the list, focus on those you find especially draining or unsatisfying. (For example, monthly book club, weekly work report, picking up child from school, annual family get together.)

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- 2** Go through each item and ask yourself:

• Do I have to do it?

- Yes: For example, it requires my presence, approval or expertise.
- No: For example, I can train someone else to do it.

• Can I delegate it?

- Yes: For example, my direct reports can do it if I train them.
- No: For example, it requires my presence, approval or expertise.

• Could I reschedule it?

- Yes: For example, I can ask my dinner party friends to come next month instead.
- No: For example, I must pick up my son from school by 4 p.m. each day.

• Could I stop doing it?

- Yes: For example, while I used to enjoy book club, I never have time to finish the book and it's time I could spend doing something else.
- No: For example, I need to pay down my credit card debt.

- 3 Your answers to the above questions will help you sort your list. Go back through your answers and, based on your responses, mark each item as:
 - **Do:** You'll do these and prioritize them according to urgency.
 - **Delegate:** You'll delegate these to someone else or ask someone else to share task.
 - **Reschedule:** You'll do these but shift the schedule or frequency to give yourself more flexibility.
 - **Stop:** You'll stop doing these.
- 4 Make a plan and follow through.
- 5 Now, take that time and do something you enjoy.

And plan to repeat this exercise from time to time, knowing priorities change.

Everyone's situation is different. But there usually are ways to at least lighten your load. Here are some examples:

1. Rather than picking up your child from school each day:
 - Could another family member do it part of the time?
 - Could you and a classmate's caregiver take turns picking up both children?
 - Could your child attend an after-school program, so you'd have more flexibility?
2. If your supervisor gives you more work to do:
 - Could you ask them to help you prioritize your workload to make room for the new responsibilities?
 - Could a colleague help out for a while?
 - Could you train another team member to do it?
3. If you have a recurring event, such as a monthly game night with friends, coaching a seasonal sport, volunteering weekly, or even hosting a major annual holiday ask yourself:
 - Am I still doing this out of habit, tradition or guilt, or do I still enjoy it?
 - Has something in my life changed that makes my time more limited?
 - Does this put a strain on my relationships, finances or emotional wellbeing?



Whatever is on your list, give yourself permission to assess your commitments. You have options. Where possible, you can choose to stop doing things that don't serve you well, so you have more time to do the things that do.