

TOP TEN STRESS BUSTERS

Have a look at these top ten tips courtesy of Professor Cary Cooper, CBE. Professor of Organisational Psychology and Health. He is the author/editor of over 120 books on occupational stress and industrial and organisational psychology.

1. Be Active	If you have a stress-related problem, physical activity can get you in the right state of mind to be able to identify the causes of your stress and find a solution. "To deal with stress effectively, you need to feel robust and you need to feel strong mentally. Exercise does that," says Cooper. Exercise won't make your stress disappear, but it will reduce some of the emotional intensity that you're feeling, clearing your thoughts and enabling you to deal with your problems more calmly.
2. Take Control	There's a solution to any problem. "If you remain passive, thinking, 'I can't do anything about my problem', your stress will get worse," says Professor Cooper. "That feeling of loss of control is one of the main causes of stress and lack of wellbeing." The act of taking control is in itself empowering, and it's a crucial part of finding a solution that satisfies you and not someone else.
3. Connect With People	A problem shared is a problem halved. A good support network of colleagues, friends and family can ease your work troubles and help you see things in a different way. "If you don't connect with people, you won't have support to turn to when you need help," says Professor Cooper. The activities we do with friends help us relax and we often have a good laugh with them, which is

	<p>an excellent stress reliever. "Talking things through with a friend will also help you find solutions to your problems," says Professor Cooper.</p>
<p>4. Have Some 'Me Time'</p>	<p>The UK workforce works the longest hours in Europe. The extra hours in the workplace mean that people aren't spending enough time doing things that they really enjoy. "We all need to take some time for socialising, relaxation or exercise," says Professor Cooper. He recommends setting aside a couple of nights a week for some quality "me time" away from work. "By earmarking those two days, it means you won't be tempted to work overtime on those days," he says.</p>
<p>5. Challenge Yourself</p>	<p>Setting yourself goals and challenges, whether at work or outside, such as learning a new language or a new sport, helps to build confidence. That in turn will help you deal with stress. "By constantly challenging yourself you're being proactive and taking charge of your life," says Professor Cooper. "By continuing to learn, you become more emotionally resilient as a person. It arms you with knowledge and makes you want to do things rather than be passive, such as watching TV all the time."</p>
<p>6. Avoid Unhealthy Habits</p>	<p>Don't rely on alcohol, smoking and caffeine as your ways of coping. "Men more than women are likely to do this. We call this avoidance behaviour," says Professor Cooper. "Women are better at seeking support from their social circle." Over the long term, these crutches won't solve your problems. They'll just create new ones. "It's like putting your head in the sand," says Professor Cooper. "It might provide temporary relief but it won't make the problems disappear. You need to tackle the cause of your stress."</p>
<p>7. Do Volunteer Work</p>	<p>Cooper says evidence shows that people who help others, through activities such as volunteering or community work, become more resilient. "Helping people who are often in</p>

	<p>situations worse than yours will help you put your problems into perspective," says Professor Cooper. "The more you give the more resilient and happy you feel."</p> <p>On a more basic level, do someone a favour every day. It can be something as small as helping someone to cross the road or going on a coffee run for colleagues. Favours cost nothing to do, and you'll feel better.</p>
<p>8. Work Smarter Not Harder</p>	<p>Good time management means quality work rather than quantity. Our long-hours culture is a well-known cause of workplace illness. "You have to get a work-life balance that suits you," says Professor Cooper. Working smarter means prioritising your work, concentrating on the tasks that will make a real difference to your work. "Leave the least important tasks to last," says Cooper. "Accept that your in-tray will always be full. Don't expect it to be empty at the end of the day."</p>
<p>9. Be Positive</p>	<p>Look for the positives in life, and things for which you're grateful. Write down three things at the end of every day which went well or for which you're grateful. "People don't always appreciate what they have," says Professor Cooper. "Try to be glass half full instead of glass half empty," he says. This requires a shift in perspective for those who are more naturally pessimistic. "It can be done," he says. "By making a conscious effort you can train yourself to be more positive about life. Problems are often a question of perspective. If you change your perspective, you may see your situation from a more positive point of view."</p>
<p>10. Accept The Things You Cannot Change</p>	<p>Changing a difficult situation isn't always possible. If this proves to be the case, recognise and accept things as they are and concentrate on everything that you do have control over. "If your company is going under and is making redundancies, there's nothing you can do about it," says Professor Cooper. "There's no point fighting it. In such a situation, you need to focus on the things that you can control, such as looking for a new job."</p>

