



Reducing stress: 5 steps for streamlining important tasks

Just about any stress management tip list you scan will guide you on how to get enough sleep, eat nutritious foods, move your body, and take time to relax and connect with people who bring you joy. For many of us, that sounds great – if only we had enough 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 choosing, focus on those items 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, those who report directly to me 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 guests 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 the 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 off 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 prioritise them according to urgency.
 - **Delegate:** You'll delegate these to someone else or ask someone else to share the task.
 - **Reschedule:** You'll do these but shift the schedule or frequency to give yourself more flexibility.
 - **Stop:** You'll stop doing these.
- 4 Draw up a plan and follow it through.
- 5 Now, take that time and do something you enjoy.

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

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

1. Rather than picking your child up from school each day:
 - Could another family member do it some of the time?
 - Could you and one of their school friends' parent/guardian take it in turns to pick up both children?
 - Could your child attend an after-school club to give you more flexibility?
2. If your supervisor gives you more work to do:
 - Could you ask them to help you prioritise your workload to make room for the new responsibilities?
 - Could a colleague help you for a while?
 - Could you train another team member to do it?
3. If you have a recurring event, such as a monthly games night with friends, taking part in a community project, volunteering weekly, or even hosting Christmas for your family, 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 causes my time to be 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.