

# Top Tips

## For Stress Busting



### **Build 'gap time' into your day**

Find three points in the day (perhaps waking, lunchtime and bed time) where you can take stock and listen to your body. Ask yourself, 'How am I doing? How am I feeling?' then listen to your body and notice any tension. If you notice any stress reactions – holding tension in your jaw, shoulders, forehead – take your consciousness to that part and scrunch it tight, then let it go. Breathe deeply as you let the tension go and notice as that area relaxes and softens.

### **Take time off**

I know it's easier said than done when you're working in schools, but it is essential that you build in some down time to your week, or you will burn out. Plan an event / gym night / cinema trip and stick to it. Even a few hours one evening will give you time to recharge and reset your batteries.

### **Build in some exercise that you enjoy**

Keeping yourself active and fit is the best stress-buster you can do. Find something that you love and add it into your routine. Netball, running, swimming with your children, yoga, climbing, cycling, dancing - the world is your oyster! Get moving and get fit – the benefits are endless. Even 20 minutes of brisk walking 3 times a week can have a positive impact on your physical and mental health.

### **Turn it off**

We now have more access than ever before to our workplace. The move towards VPN access of your remote desktop means you have 24hr access to work. Put your phone down. Turn off your laptop. Stop checking your emails – they can wait. Set a deadline and stick to it – 8pm, 9pm – it's time to stop!

### **Try to get into good sleep habits**

Create a work-free space in your bedroom which will become your sanctuary, a space away from work. Make sure you aren't using a screen before you sleep and do something relaxing like reading, sewing or mediating if you find it difficult to 'drop off'. Try to reduce your intake of caffeine and other stimulants such as alcohol and nicotine after 6pm, and drink camomile tea or water instead.



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### **Talk through your day with a good friend or your partner**

Even the act of discussing things often makes you feel better. A problem shared really is a problem halved. As soon as you vocalise the things that are getting on top of you, you can start to identify changes that you can make so that they become less of an issue in your day.

### **Learn to breathe**

Practise deep-breathing techniques such as slowly inhaling while counting to five; hold your breath for five seconds then breathe out slowly. Repeat this 10 times when feeling stressed, concentrating on nothing but the rise and fall of your chest and stomach, letting your breath become the focus of your thoughts.

### **De-clutter**

Mess creates confusion and a sense of loss of power. If your desk/home/car is messy and disorganised, have a good clear out and tidy up. You'll instantly feel more in control. Give away or throw away anything that doesn't bring you joy – let it go and make space in your home for calm and tidy living.

### **Think positive**

Use 'affirmations' – positive strands of thought put into words. Repeating, 'I am a loving and much loved person', can work wonders. Say it and believe it. And it will become true.

### **Spend time in nature**

Going outdoors helps to relieve your stress naturally, by lowering levels of the stress hormone cortisol. Even five minutes in nature can help reduce stress and boost your mood.