

Destressing at the end of the day

It is normal to accumulate stress throughout the day. Pausing to release stress and mindfully reset at the end of each day is a simple way to mitigate some of the negative effects of stress. You can do this by building healthy habits into your daily routine. It's also an important part of creating a clear boundary between your work life and personal life.

What is Stress?

Stress is a normal human reaction to change and pressure in our lives. In fact, the human brain is designed to respond to stress, and in small doses it can keep us alert, motivated, and productive.

When Stress Becomes a Problem

Physical: Headaches, stomach aches or other body pains, digestive issues, cardiovascular issues, weakened immune system, hypertension, sexual dysfunction, skin issues, diabetes

Emotional and Cognitive: Anxiety or panic attacks, rumination or excessive worry, depression or low mood, irritability, feeling overwhelmed, difficulty concentrating

Behavioral: Over or undereating, avoiding or numbing with alcohol or drugs, other addictive or compulsive behaviors, tobacco use

Tips for Destressing at the End of the Day

As you're leaving work, pause for a few minutes to practice deep breathing and stress release. Inhale deeply for 4 seconds, feeling air inflate your lungs. Exhale for 4 seconds, imagining you are exhaling your stress. Repeat for several minutes until you feel more relaxed.

Set your intentions by writing a destressing phrase. Identify and state your motivation. Use this phrase every day, or periodically write a new one.

Example: *"I am committed to leaving the stress of the day behind today, because I want to be fully present with my family (friends, roommates) this evening."*

Identify and attend to your self-care needs. What do you need to destress each day? (A few minutes of quiet time to recenter yourself at the end of the day, exercise, water, nourishing meals, etc.)

Practice mindfulness. As you wrap up work each day, practice mindful awareness of your surroundings. Shift your attention away from the events of the day and toward the present moment.

Remind yourself of what brings you joy. Practice gratitude.

Maintain healthy sleep habits. Make sure you are getting enough sleep each night. Create a bedtime routine that helps you relax and ease into sleep. Take a break from screens. Take a bath, read a book or magazine or listen to music that helps you relax.

Cultivate playfulness. Play a game, spend intentional time with a roommate, friend, partner, pet, or your children.

Imagine putting the stress of the day in a box outside your home. Leave it there, and each time you find your mind wandering toward the stressful events of the day, re-imagine opening the box and putting your stress inside.