



**Advice** «

# Coping with stress

Ann Rapstoff is a counsellor and coach in Didcot, here she looks at overcoming your stress to give yourself a good, positive start to the year

We often start the New Year full of hope and the possibility of change. Perhaps you want to lose weight, get fitter, see old friends you have lost touch with, spend more time with the family or try and look after yourself more. But before you know it you are waking up with a start, rushing to the shower without time to eat your breakfast, gulping down a cup of coffee, bundling the children into the car and battling your way through the day. You sit at your desk looking at hundreds of emails and start to feel overwhelmed and your commitment starts to ebb away. So before you are half way through January, you start to feel stressed and all your hopes of making those changes to your life have become swallowed up by the demands of every day life.

If we don't look after our own needs, we can end up on a treadmill of reacting to whatever is thrown at us. If we don't allow ourselves time to take stock and take baby steps to take more control of our lives we run the danger of becoming tired and overwhelmed. Looking after your own needs and finding time for yourself is not about being selfish. Self care is about looking after ourselves, in order to feel more content about our lives and manage the stresses we face. You can't eradicate stress, but by reminding ourselves of how to enjoy life and the journey as well as small goals, we can face the new year with a little more of a spring in our step.

## 10 ways we can look after ourselves in 2015:

1. If one of your wishes for change is to make contact with friends or family, or do something you keep putting off, make some space to make it happen. Ask yourself what really matters to you, not what you think you should do and take tiny steps to make it happen.
2. Ask yourself if the expectations and demands you're placing on yourself are realistic. Don't set yourself

unrealistic goals for change and enjoy the journey not the end target.

3. Why not stop that constant urge for striving and improving and running towards the next thing and the next thing? Look for contentment in the small things of life today, rather than trying to reach for happiness that is always tomorrow, next week, or next year.
4. Work on accepting your life and who you are now. Nobody is perfect we all have our flaws. We don't need to aspire to be perfect just to try our best.
5. Give yourself time to sit back and breathe in the fruits of what you have achieved in your life. Do nothing sometimes, just take time for yourself.
6. When you find yourself staying late at work remind yourself of the importance of play and having space to unwind. Avoid overworking and get a good night's sleep. It will help your body and mind to heal and feel rejuvenated.
7. When stressful events happen in life take some breathing space and watch how you react. Reflect on whether you perhaps step in too quickly to fix it. Or perhaps you respond by getting angry or feel low because things have not gone as you wanted them too. Sometimes the best things happen without the need to plan or control the future.
8. Having a good network of friends can help you through the difficult times and remind yourself of the importance of just being with others you care about.
9. Remind yourself to take breaks, eat healthily and take time to savour your food. Notice the aroma of the next cup of coffee, of that delicious sandwich.
10. Focus on one thing at a time where possible, and if something on your to do list doesn't need to be done now let go of it. In fact let go of that to do list and enjoy what's happening in this minute now rather than getting caught up in the future.

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