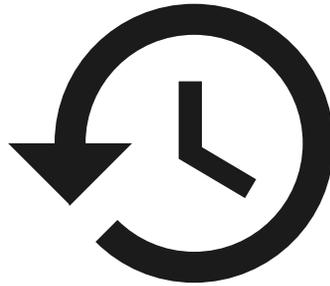


HOW TO D-STRESS

DISTRACT

Create physical, cognitive, and/or emotional distance from a stressor



WHY IT WORKS

Due to homeostasis, our body naturally wants to return to a state of balance when our stress levels rise. If we can create time and space away from a stressor, we let time function as a regulator.

KEY IDEAS

1. Distraction is best when a) time isn't critical (a looming deadline); b) the stressor isn't likely to return (someone cuts us off in traffic); or c) emotional hijacking is high (we are heated in an argument).
2. Distraction doesn't address the stressor, so it is often overused and can turn into a habit (e.g. procrastination).
3. If we tend to ruminate -- or we experience a lot of chronic stress -- distraction isn't always as effective.

EXAMPLES

There are three main routes of distraction:

Thought redirect

- Participating in a hobby
- Reading a book

Emotion redirect

- Watching a funny movie
- Taking a relaxing bath

Physical Redirect

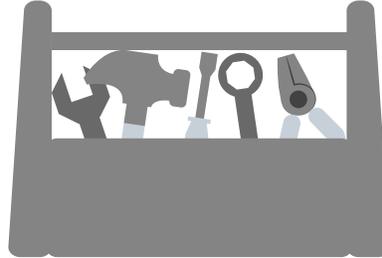
- Exercising
- Going for a walk



HOW TO D-STRESS

DEAL WITH THE STRESSOR

Use problem-solving strategies to reduce the stressor



WHY IT WORKS

When we work to solve a problem, not only does our positive action increase our resilience, but we learn new coping strategies for similar situations. And, of course, if we address the stressor, we have less stress.

KEY IDEAS

1. If our attempt to deal with the stressor fails, we can sometimes get more frustrated. So, this strategy works best when we pair it with other methods (e.g. disputing negative thoughts, developing mindfulness)
2. Not all stressors can be "fixed." But, we can still apply problem-solving strategies to come up with new coping approaches

TYPICAL STEPS

1. Identify the real problem
2. Brainstorm solutions
3. Analyze best methods to try
4. Identify potential obstacles and how you will overcome them
5. Take action steps
6. Re-evaluate to see if new strategies are needed



HOW TO D-STRESS

DISCUSS

Process the stressor to reduce rumination and move forward



WHY IT WORKS

Putting our stressors and emotions into words activates the prefrontal cortex, which can reduce activity in the amygdala. It can also provide us insights for reframing the stressor or taking new action.

KEY IDEAS

1. Discussing works well when our rumination is high and/or other methods aren't helping.
2. Too much processing can sometimes have an opposite effect, so aim for a high "progress-to-process" ratio. For example, if talking about a frustration with colleague, limit your "venting" (process) to 30% of your time. Spend the rest of the time talking about actions steps for moving forward (progress).
3. Choose the right people to discuss your stressors. Some people may attempt to "fix" our problems and give unsolicited advice rather than listening fully. Others might "stress steal" and make our stressor about themselves.

EXAMPLES

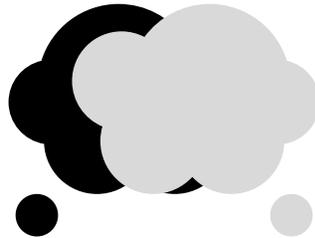
- Writing or journaling
- Talking with a mentor, friend, or partner
- Prayer or spiritual practice



HOW TO D-STRESS

DISPUTE NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

Use mental reframes to reduce rumination and resentment



WHY IT WORKS

Our thoughts can increase or intensify our cortisol levels. Mental shifts can help us see our circumstances as more logical and increase our optimism that we can handle stress in the future.

KEY IDEAS

We all have a metacognitive style for thinking about stressors. "Disputation" is one of the most common strategies used in cognitive behavioral therapy, which means it is effective, but it takes a lot of work to change.

EXAMPLES

Distortions and Reframes



Distortion	Example	Reframe
Black/White Thinking	That lesson was a disaster.	There were parts of that lesson that were rough, but students really understood the main idea of the story
Personalizing	It's all my fault that our fundraiser fell short.	I could've tried some different ideas. But this was also my first time leading this committee, so I need to be kind to myself.
Catastrophizing	My day is ruined.	It's just a spilled coffee. I can get a new one in the lounge.
Permanence	These kids are never going to get this.	I need to seek support from colleagues on new ways to teach this text.



HOW TO D-STRESS

DEVELOP MINDFULNESS

Use focused, non-judgmental attention practices to increase equanimity



WHY IT WORKS

There are many reasons why mindfulness helps:

- Practicing non-judgmental thinking can detach our emotional response to an event;
- Deep breathing activates the *para*sympathetic nervous system;
- Focused attention helps us shift thoughts from rumination;
- Thought-noting engages the prefrontal cortex, reducing amygdala activity.

EXAMPLES

- Yoga
- Meditation
- Mindfulness-based stress reduction
- Deep Breathing exercises

RESOURCES

Meditation

Mindful.org (<https://www.mindful.org>)

Meditation Oasis (<https://www.meditationoasis.com/podcast>)

Palouse Mindfulness (<https://palousemindfulness.com>)

Apps

Simple

Habit

Aura

Headspace

Calm

Yoga

Funky Buddha Yogga (<https://yogahothouse.com/yoga-videos/>)

Do Yoga with Me (www.doyogawithme.com)



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