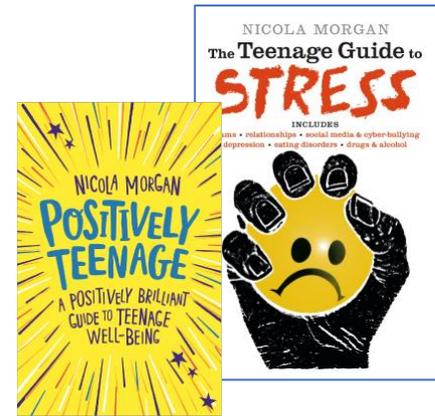


STRESS LESS

TIPS from Nicola Morgan,
brain expert and author of
many books to support young
people through adolescence



Stress is not bad; it helps us perform at our best when we need to. But stress can be a problem when it becomes panic or when it happens too often or for too long. We must learn to switch off, to give brain and body breaks, preventing illness and maximising performance. Our bodies are not designed for constant stress. Tackle it before it causes problems. Here's how.

These tips work for people of all ages:

1. Learn to breathe properly and notice when you aren't. A one-minute breathing exercise can make a huge difference to your brain and body. (See my website for a free relaxation audio.)
2. Identify simple, positive things that make you feel better and do at least one every day for about half an hour. It could be a bath, a walk, a game, a laugh – whatever works for you.
3. Always remember: relaxation is not a luxury. You *need* breaks to make your brain work well.
4. Don't let yourself get too hungry. Your brain can't work at its best without fuel.
5. Exercise. A fast walk is perfect. (Don't exercise too much or you'll have no energy for work.)
6. Prioritise sleep: it's nature's healer and has a profound effect on all aspects of physical and mental health. Wind down (screens off) for 1-2 hours before sleep. Tips on my website. Stress harms sleep but poor sleep makes stress worse: improve sleep and you'll feel less stressed.
7. Get outside; find a natural view. Our brains react well to big spaces and greenery.
8. Do "readaxation". Being immersed in an enjoyable book is a great way to relax. Fiction works well because it takes you out of your own worries but non-fiction is great, too – anything as long as you're reading what you *want* to read. Evidence on my website.
9. Remember that almost all bad things change and pass and soon you will feel differently about whatever worries you now. Everything changes.
10. Talk to someone before your worries get too much. A worry shared is a worry halved. Whatever your worry about, you are not alone. Choose a trusted adult.
11. List the things in your life *you could change* and start to tackle *one* of them. Small steps.
12. Know what relaxes YOU: it might be sport, chatting with friends, listening to music, day-dreaming, reading. Whatever it is, do it! Listen to how your body responds.
13. Know your stress triggers and symptoms and learnt to spot them early.
14. Have a laugh. Laughter is invigorating and de-stressing, releasing endorphins around our brains. So, whether it's watching an episode of your favourite comedy show or laughing at a YouTube clip of goats yelling like humans, do it whenever you need to!

More help in *The Teenage Guide to Stress, Positively Teenage* and on my website:

www.nicolamorgan.com Copyright © Nicola Morgan 2014

From *BRAIN STICKS*: eye-opening teaching materials about the brain