

## Stress Management: Reducing and coping with stress part 3

So far we have identified our external Stressors and our Stress Strategy. This will stand you in good stead to reducing and coping with stress in a more proactive and positive way. The next 3 instalments of the Incite Coaching Stress Management series will explore how you currently cope with stress and provide additional methods for controlling or avoiding stress.

### How do you currently cope with stress?

It is vital that you explore how you currently cope with stress. Is it helpful or is it unproductive? Many people cope with stress in ways which can actually make matters worse, such as with alcohol, smoking, overeating (or under-eating), filling every second of the day to avoid the problem, violence or withdrawing. In all aspects of life it is important that you look after yourself, and during times of stress it is even more important.

If your methods of dealing with stress are not productive, it is time to find other methods. As Einstein says "The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result" (I love this quote as some of you may have gathered!) Find a method which works for you, **and** contributes to your physical and mental wellbeing, such as sport, meditating or having a relaxing bath.

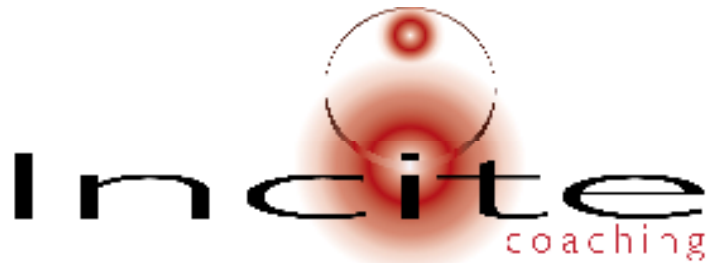
### Avoid unnecessary stress

Not all stressors can be eliminated and it is not healthy to avoid situations that should be addressed. However, chances are there are a number of stressors that you could actually avoid or you can reduce the impact of.

**Control your environment** – if you are aware of things that cause you stress in your environment, such as sitting in traffic, try taking the bus and reading a book or listening to your favourite music. If shopping gets you in a "tizzy," try shopping online.

**Avoid stressful people** – it is not always possible to end a relationship completely, however you can limit the amount of time you spend with the person.

**Avoid stressful topics** – If you know that debates or certain topics of conversations get you agitated or always lead to an argument. Remove them from your conversation list. Think of other topics that you can talk about calmly and freely.



## **Alter stressful situations**

It is not always possible to avoid stressful situations. For example, if you find yourself stressed at work, it can be very difficult to avoid going to work (unless you find yourself a new job). In these sorts of situations, ask yourself “How can I positively alter the situation?” Use the techniques in the last two instalments of this series to identify what it is specifically about work that is causing you stress. Is it a person? The workload? A certain client? If you are struggling with this, ask a confidant or partner to help. Ask them to listen to your “rantings,” they do not need to try and solve the issue, just let you ramble. The chances are you will answer your own question. Once you have identified the specific stressor, brainstorm all the possible ways to avoid it. Can you move to a different part of the office where you are less exposed to the stressor?

**Check your responses** - Can the way you respond to a situation be contributing to your stress? For example, try discussing problems rather than bottling them up or try listening rather than controlling the situation with your conversation.

**Face issues head on** – Do you back off at the first signs of a negotiation or argument? Does this then cause you stress? Try tackling issues head on. If you are worried about telling a client or partner a certain problem, explain the issue to them, and provide a solution and time by which you will have implemented the solution. They will thank you for being honest.

**Look at your to-do-list** – Do you finish the day feeling like you haven’t stopped and yet achieved nothing, except add to your to-do-list? Look at your to do list and take of non essential tasks. How can you outsource certain tasks? How can you save time? Once you have made a crack at your to-do-list, you’ll find it easy to complete as you have the momentum required to keep you going. Always remember the 80/20 rule. 80% completion rate is great. It is 80% more than the people who have actually done nothing.

Make a few of these changes today and you will notice the difference in your stress levels immediately.

If you have missed any of our series, check them out at:

<http://www.incitecoaching.com.au/articles.html>