

Time-Poor and Stressed? How to Reclaim your time and Reduce Stress Levels Effectively

By Jenny Brockis



Do you ever wish you could ‘turn back time’ as Cher lamented in her song? One of the worst things about feeling time-poor is the impact it has on our thinking skills. The more we worry about missing that important deadline, handing in an assignment on time or working past midnight to catch up on a project, the poorer our overall performance. We may have the capability to undertake the task at hand, but feeling that we’re under the pump and short on time, can lead us

to cutting corners and taking risks we wouldn’t normally take. Just how did we all get so busy?

Our level of busyness reflects how our work has increased in volume and complexity. Add in a barrel-load of distractions and interruptions in the form of phone calls, emails, text messages and meetings, no wonder our working day seems to have morphed into a maelstrom of competing and conflicting demands. It’s time to reclaim our full time

entitlements.

1 Discard the illusion of time poverty.

Yes, it’s true; our perception of being time poor is just that, an illusion. However we can do two things to help change this, to feel as if we have all the time we need.

a) We need to disconnect from our technology more often. Studies have shown that when we are engaged with our technology a lot (and who

isn't these days) our perception of time becomes flawed. We think time has run away from us - "Cripes I've been on the laptop for an hour, whereas the reality is, it's only been 50 minutes. That sense of time loss increases our stress response. Unplugging from our technology more frequently helps us to regain a more valid idea of how much time has really passed.

b) We can change our language from a statement "I don't have time!!!!" to a question "I'm a bit busy right now, when would be a better time to start that new project?" What are you telling yourself about how much time you have available?

2 Apply a new frame of reference.

Those sweaty palms, pounding heart, churning gut and elevated breathing we recognise as our body's response to stress. But what if instead of associating that with feeling afraid or stressed, you chose to reframe it as a sign of your body gearing up to meet a new and exciting challenge? Your conscious choice to insert a positive spin to those physiological

changes helps you to dial down the negative and stay connected to your executive suite of higher thinking skills to think better, maintain focus and achieve more. Because let's face it, we feel those same sensations when we are really happy or super excited by something good - it's just our interpretation that changes.

3 Tune out regularly.

Because stress is a normal part of being, knowing how to effectively regulate our emotional response requires a daily routine of tuning out to help us keep things in perspective. Too much stress acts as a magnifier to all our problems including the perception of time poverty. Your response to "just one more thing" will very much depend on your state of mind at any given moment. Taking time out to chill, relax or just press pause is a great way to be able to apply a more measured response to whatever comes next.

Far from being a time waster, tuning out gives you the time to think things through, to consider what's what and what's next. Stepping into your thinking-space helps diminish the

impact of stress and returns time in your favour. Some have told me how their best time to 'just be' and think is found at 35,000 feet. But we don't all have to jump on a jet plane to find our own thinking space.

Mindfulness meditation has become a very popular means of reducing stress with the added bonus of better attention and clearer thinking. A fifteen to twenty minute practice is all that is required to help make your day a stress free zone. If meditation is not your thing, twenty minutes of aerobic exercise helps to burn off excess stress hormones and elevates mood. Swimming, running or just being outside in a green space can be very calming.

One of the other best tune-out stations is sleep; taking a 20 minute power nap or ensuring you get a good 7-8 hrs of good quality uninterrupted shuteye. By harnessing the power of slumber you can better regulate your emotions and stress and rediscover all that time you thought had gone missing in action.



Dr Jenny Brockis specialises in brain and organisational health. She is the author of *Future Brain: The 12 Keys to Create Your High-Performance Brain* (Wiley) available online and at all good bookstores. Visit www.drjennybrockis.com