



6 Healthy Ways to Transform Stress

We at FULLFILL are big on the three As of change—*awareness*, *acceptance*, and *action*. The idea is to be *aware* of your behavior; *accept* that you have the power to make healthy choices (or not); and then take *action* to doing the healthy thing. Studies show that using strategies like the three As strengthens our self-regulation and accountability muscles, making it easier to overcome real-life challenges and make positive health choices. The three As can be applied not just to weight loss habits as part of the FULLFILL program, but to everyday challenges at work and home.

Applying the Three As

Awareness

Start by assessing your stress. To get a broader sense of your overall stress level during the past month, use this brief, adapted version of a scientifically validated test. Simply write down the number that corresponds to your answer. Don't overthink this: If you do it fairly quickly, you're likely to get a more accurate picture of what's going on.

Question	0 = Never	1 = Rarely	2 = Sometimes	3 = Fairly Often	4 = Very Often
1. In the last month, how often have you felt that you couldn't control the important things in your life?					
2. How often have you felt confident or self-assured about your ability to handle personal problems or cope with changes in your life?					
3. In the last month, how often have you felt that you were on top of things or that things were going your way?					
4. How often have you felt that problems or difficulties were piling up so high that you couldn't cope or overcome them?					

Applying the Three As

Acceptance

Tally up your points. The lowest possible score is 0 and the highest is 16. The closer to 0 you scored, the lower your stress level is; the closer to 16 you get, the more stressed-out you feel. Don't stress about your score: There is no "normal" level—it's a continuum, and it's likely to change over time. That's why it's important to suss out your stress level regularly.

Scoring

If you scored...	Give yourself...
For questions 1 and 4	
0	0
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
For questions 2 and 3	
0	0
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4

Applying the Three As

Action

Now that you know your current stress assessment score, it is time to take action. You can't always put the brakes on stress in your life but you can modify your responses to it. Besides helping you feel better in any given moment, changing the way you deal with stress can also help you feel stronger, more capable and resilient, and more joyful. As you improve the way you manage stress, it will become easier for you to reach your wellness goal (and stay there) because you'll develop more effective coping strategies than you have used in the past. As you peruse this list and cultivate these strategies, notice how many of them rely on FULLFILL's three As of change—*Awareness, Acceptance, and Action*. These principles can help put you in the driver's seat of so many aspects of your life, including how you deal with stress.



Applying the Three As

Six Stress Busters

1. CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF. Ask yourself: Am I feeling down? Low on energy? Am I easily angered? Having trouble sleeping? Drinking more alcohol? Or am I experiencing other stress-distress signals? Developing this level of awareness not only alerts you to the possibility that you're suffering from stress overload, but it also gives you baselines from which to measure progress in not letting stress get to you and in taking the opportunity to pause and consider the choices that you have in the moment. Awareness also helps you develop control over your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, rather than letting them control you.

2. CHILL OUT. Treat yourself to a favorite mindfulness meditation or breathing exercise. This is part of the “acceptance” principle because doing a meditation allows you to acknowledge that you're feeling stressed without judging yourself; instead, you're a calm observer of your thoughts and feelings. You're actually training your mind to be more open and less reactive. Meditation also helps reduce anxiety, depression, and pain, according to a review of 47 studies. In fact, it's so powerful that it has become a “must-have” tool in stress-management programs throughout the world.

3. MOVE MORE—AND REGULARLY. Walking, dancing, biking—any form of aerobic exercise can stimulate the release of brain chemicals that boost mood and energy and can improve your ability to cope with stress. There are lots of free apps out there that share desk exercises and stretches that can help with movement at work. In addition, yoga gets lots of research-based props as a stress-slayer. How does yoga help relieve stress? Awareness and mindfulness play a big role because with yoga, you're focused on the present moment, as you move in and out of various poses and modulate your breathing.

Applying the Three As

Six Stress Busters

4. SET PRIORITIES. You know the old saying, “First things first”—it’s a way to remind yourself to make the most important task a priority for your attention or action and then move down the list from there. Put this principle to good use by regularly asking yourself: What needs to be done ASAP and what can I put off ‘til later or strike off my list altogether without adding to my stress quotient? If you try to handle everything life throws at you at once, you’ll get overwhelmed and you might not accomplish all that much. Don’t be afraid to say “no” to certain asks! Let someone else handle things that are not essential for you to do.

5. SEEK SUPPORT FROM FRIENDS AND FAMILY. Having dinner with friends, or even a phone call, can lift your spirits, calm stress, and increase levels of feel-good hormones. Don’t underestimate the power of staying socially connected: Having that support from people you trust is a major stress-buster. (But beware—the opposite is also true: Unhealthy relationships are a cause of stress.)

6. GET ENOUGH SLEEP. You already know how much easier it is to feel good, get your work done, deal with problems—and actually enjoy yourself!—after you’ve had a good night’s sleep. Well, it’s a two-way street—getting enough shut-eye reduces your perception of stress and increases your ability to cope with life’s zings and arrows, and tamping down stress helps you stop counting sheep (or llamas or unicorns or whatever) and drift more easily to the Land of Nod.

Now that you have some more tools in your toolbox for implementing the three As of FULLFILL, you can apply it to any and all situations in your life. Print out this handy visual guide to use throughout your day!

✓
Awareness

✓
Acceptance

✓
Action

6 STRESS BUSTERS



Check In with Yourself



Chill Out



Move More – and Regularly



Set Priorities



Seek Support from Friends & Family



Get Enough Sleep

Want to learn more about FULLFULL?

Email us at sales@fullfill.com or visit our website, FULLFILL.com