

10 Tips to De-stressing for Teenagers

1. **Eating regularly** - at least 3 times a day. Going too long without eating makes us irritable and grumpy. When did you last skip a meal? Which one was it? Why was that?
2. **Choose whole grain** (high fibre) starchy foods - 2 or 3 times a day. Wholegrain based foods include oats, wholemeal bread, and high fibre cereals. These keep your blood sugar levels stable and are good for a healthy digestion.
3. **Eat whole fruit**, not juice - twice a day. Pure juice and smoothies are better than drinks with added sugar, but whole fruit is better. It gives you all the fibre which helps to keep your blood sugar and mood stable.
4. **Eat fish - twice a week** - white fish and canned tuna are great. Even better are oily fish that contain lots of omega 3 fats. These are great for your mood. Salmon and mackerel are good examples.
5. **Eat some red meat, beans or lentils - weekly / daily.** If you eat meat, beef, lamb and venison are rich in Iron and Zinc. These are really important "brain minerals". Teenage girls need more iron than boys. Having some red meat twice a week gives you lots of Iron which is good for your mood and helps you concentrate. If you don't eat meat, having beans, lentils, chick peas in soups curries and chillis is a great way to get iron and you get fibre as well.
6. **Eat you greens - daily.** All vegetables are great as they contain fibre and micronutrients (just like fruit). Green veg are especially good as they are full of magnesium. This is another "brain mineral" that helps to keep us feeling calm. Over one third of teenagers are deficient in Magnesium. How many days last week did you eat something green? (Skittles don't count!).
7. **Avoiding sweetened soft drinks** (sugar, additives, caffeine) - these cause sharp rises in blood sugar followed by a sharp "crash" in blood sugar. When our blood sugar crashes suddenly, our mood worsens and we look for another quick boost from more sugary drinks! Also, the additives like colours, preservatives and caffeine, can affect our mood. Drinks that use these colours will carry a warning in very small print: "*may cause an adverse effect on activity and concentration in children*".
8. **Limit tea and coffee - after school** (a cup or tea or coffee a day is fine). Try not to have more than 1 a day and don't have any after 6pm or you might find it harder to get to sleep. Caffeine is addictive. It can make us feel alert but also more anxious. People who take energy drinks are more likely to suffer from headaches and stomach aches. Sometimes we get shaky and sweaty.
9. **Getting some sun - April to September.** You need to get the balance right. Take care not to get sunburn, but also take care to get enough sun on your skin. Scotland has a limited number of sunny days and if you are inside every time it's sunny, you will become deficient in vitamin D, like a third of people in Scotland. That's bad news for your bones but low vitamin D might also worsen your mood.
10. **Getting active - daily.** It's not all about what you eat. When we get active our brain releases special "feel good" chemicals called endorphins. Find something that suits you. Not everyone enjoys the gym or competitive team sports. Dancing, cycling and even walking give you the "feel good" factor. Do something that gets your heart beating faster, makes you breathe deeply and gets your muscles moving.

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