



# Four Ways Physicians Can Decrease Stress, Improve Time Management

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Does this sound familiar? You feel in control of your responsibilities most of the morning, but then when the afternoon hits, all of a sudden everything seems disorganized and out of control.

It's a common problem many of my clients face, especially those with highly stressful careers, such as physicians.

Here's how you can better find balance and control throughout your day:

**1. Give yourself a break.** Take mental pauses throughout the day, particularly as new developments occur. The best laid plans often go astray, and people who can maintain order know when to let go of one activity and redirect their focus toward another.

**2. Change your perspective.** Being in control is often related to how you feel about a situation. If a high priority problem comes your way right before you go home, you can regard it as a major intrusion in your day, or you can see it as a professional challenge and an opportunity to be a better doctor.

Also, before, during, and after handling the problem, continue considering the many benefits of completing it.

### **3. Heed the signs.**

There are early warning signs that might indicate you are heading toward disorganization and stress. Anytime you start stacking horizontal piles on your desk is an indication that you are operating in a malfunctioning mode. If you find yourself perpetually five minutes to 10 minutes late for meetings, and if you are handling activities up to the last minute before turning to what's next, you're leaving yourself vulnerable for some anxious moments.

When these instances occur, alarm bells should ring that it's time to cut back and let something go.

**4. Take responsibility.** Feeling organized can help reduce stress and keep you focused on your priorities. Begin to evaluate your ritual behaviors to ensure you are operating in a thoughtful and efficient manner. For instance, you might find that you ceremoniously (but not strategically) arrange the items on your desk and over-read the newspaper.

Avoid playing the victim, or believing that circumstances of others cause you to be disorganized. Take ownership; accept responsibility for what occurs in your life. "Own" your time.