

Stop Stressing Yourself Out by Susan Fletcher

Sometimes, you are your own worst enemy when it comes to stress. Susan Fletcher, a practicing psychologist and stress management expert, teaches these valuable techniques to help alleviate stress in your life:

Don't read into things so much. "Sometimes a look is just a look and a dirty coffee cup is just a dirty coffee cup. It's not a passive-aggressive way to say you are not appreciated," Fletcher says. Don't make things bigger than they need to be—with people or work. Some people make a project bigger than it needs to be in an effort to increase their own value, but they are increasing their own stress as a result.

Learn how to transfer trust. "I really like Stephen M.R. Covey's stuff from his book *Speed of Trust*. He says people have to be able to trust before they feel it. Just like with your kids when you give them a little rope. And with someone who works for you, you have to let them fail because failure is feedback," Fletcher says. "Don't just say, 'It's easier to do myself.'"

Recognize when you are being inefficient. "People who are stressed get stuck answering e-mails for two hours at the expense of higher-value items that need to be taken care of," Fletcher says. "Don't get lost in inefficient behavior. Ask yourself, 'What's my ultimate outcome I want here and what do I need to get there?'"

Find an accountability partner to help you meet goals. "Choose a friend or a family member—probably not someone who lives with you because you don't want to muddy the waters. It has to be someone you will listen to but who will hold you accountable."

Say no sometimes. "You have to say no to things you might enjoy, but are not in line with where you are professionally or personally at the moment," Fletcher says. Then you can spend your time on what matters to you most.