




Don't let  
your tensions  
take over



**Don't let your  
tensions and  
anxieties take over.  
Learn to live with them  
– master them!**

## **Don't Let Your Tensions Take Over**

Tensions and anxiety are natural reactions to anything that threatens to upset our safety, well-being and happiness. Accidents, violence, financial troubles, problems at work, or family disputes can all provoke anxiety and tension.

Sometimes, however we become tense and anxious when no real danger exists. We get worn out, on edge and can't reason things out or control our feelings, as we usually would. This booklet outlines twelve suggestions which can assist in overcoming tensions.

Remember as you read these suggestions that success will come only with determination, persistence and time. Also remember that where your health is concerned, your doctor is your best guide so discuss any concerns and anxieties with him/her.

## Talk it over

When something worries you, talk it over. Don't bottle it up. Confide your worry to a person you can trust: a partner; a family member; a good friend or family doctor. Talking things over helps to relieve the strain, enables you to see your worry in a clearer light, and often helps you to see what you can do about it.

## Escape for a while

When things go wrong, it often helps to get away from the problem for a while; to lose yourself in a film, book, sport or a brief break away for a change of scene. Making yourself 'stand there and suffer' is a form of self punishment, and is unlikely to solve the problem. It is perfectly realistic and healthy to escape for long enough to recover breath and balance.



## Work off your anger

If you feel yourself using anger as a general way of behaviour, remember that while anger may give you a temporary sense of righteousness, or even of power, it will generally leave you feeling or looking rather foolish. If you feel like lashing out at someone who has provoked you, try curbing the impulse. Instead try to do something constructive with the pent-up energy – try some physical activity like gardening, DIY, sport or going for a walk.

## Give in occasionally

If you find yourself getting into frequent quarrels with people and feeling obstinate and defiant, remember that frustrated children behave that way. By all means stand your ground on what you know is right, but do so calmly and always allow for the possibility that you could turn out to be wrong. Even if you're right, there is nothing wrong with giving in occasionally. If you yield, you'll usually find that others will do so too.



## Do something for someone else

If you feel that you are worrying about yourself all the time, try doing something for someone else. You'll find that this will help you forget your own worries and, even better, will give you a warm and comforting feeling of having done something positive.

## Take one thing at a time

Take the most urgent tasks and pitch into them, one at a time, forgetting the rest for the time being. If you feel you cannot tackle things in this way reflect - Are you sure you are not overestimating the importance of many of the things you have to do?



## Don't be a perfectionist

No one can be perfect in everything. Decide which things you do well and then put your major effort into these. Give yourself a pat on the back for the things you do well, but don't set yourself impossible targets for everything you attempt.

## Don't compare yourself to others

Constant comparison to others can be very debilitating and eventually will lead to feelings of failure. Instead of comparing yourself to others, recognise and applaud your personal strengths and qualities.



## Don't be too critical

Everyone has unique virtues, shortcomings, values and the right to develop as an individual. People who feel let down by the shortcomings, real or imagined, of others are really let down about themselves. Instead of being critical about another person's behaviour, search out his or her good points and help to develop them. This will give both of you satisfaction and, at the same time, will help you to gain a better understanding of yourself.

## Give the other person a chance

When people are under emotional tension, they often feel that they have to be first – to edge out the other person, even if the goal is as trivial as getting ahead on the road. Competition is contagious but so is co-operation.



## Make an effort in social situations

Many of us have the feeling that we are being inadequate, excluded, slighted or neglected when in the company of others, especially when meeting a new group of people. Instead of shrinking away and withdrawing, occasionally try making the opening move yourself, rather than waiting to be introduced by others or drawn into conversation.

## Plan your recreation

Many people drive themselves so hard that they allow too little time for recreation which is an essential for sound physical and mental health. They find it hard to relax. If this applies to you, a planned routine of recreation might help – set yourself definite hours when you engage in some outside activity. Find yourself a hobby that you can throw yourself into completely and with pleasure. While you are doing so, make a positive effort to forget all about your work. You'll find that if you do this, you will return to your responsibilities with renewed enthusiasm, drive and initiative.



Mental Health Ireland is a national voluntary organisation which aims to promote positive mental health and to actively support persons with a mental illness, their families and carers by identifying their needs and advocating their rights. Mental Health Ireland is made up of a network of local Mental Health Associations (MHAs) throughout the country who are affiliated to and share the same aims and objectives as the national body. Mental Health Ireland is affiliated to Mental Health Europe and the World Federation for Mental Health.



**Mental Health Ireland**  
*Supporting Positive Mental Health*

Further information is available from:

**Mental Health Ireland**

Mensana House, 6 Adelaide Street

Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

Tel: 01-2841166

Fax: 01-2841736

Email: [info@mentalhealthireland.ie](mailto:info@mentalhealthireland.ie)

[www.mentalhealthireland.ie](http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie)