I'm not robot!

by Keith RobinsonIf you're reading this chances are you've got some interest in making your life less stressed. I know it's a big deal for me. I'm a naturally stressed-out person and I'm trying more and more to keep my stress-level low. Lately it's been pretty high, and while I know it'll pass, I'm really trying to spend more time relaxing. It's not as easy as you might think. In this first installment of a two-part series on stress reduction I'll discuss some ways you can set yourself up to be less stressed. Find the right jobHaving a job you love and one that can support a good work/life balance is a great way to start down to the road to a less stressful life. When it comes to work/life balance, some jobs are better than others. Over at Jugglezine they...Read moreA job where you can simply work less is always good too. If nothing else you need to be able to take a break from work. Well, working hard has its benefits too. Think about it. How often do you get to work—really work? We spend so much of our work days doing everything but working. Dealing with office politics, digging through e-mail and RSS, having meetings and all the rest. For me anyway once of the best ways to keep the stress level low is to get things done and get head down and do some work. I feel my best when I'm writing, or designing or coding. Well, either when I'm doing that or just after I've finished a productive four hour stint (I work in three or four hour blocks usually). It's also got the added benefits of keeping the to-do list manageable. Set boundaries You've got to know when to say no and when to quit. It seems like every day someone is asking for something new, but you've got to realize that for every new job, new task, new bit of information you've decided to bring on you've got to either take away from something else or find more energy somewhere inside to deal with it. Good work isn't all about getting things done and doing lots of work, it's about doing it right also. I'm not a perfectionist (perfect is the enemy of the good), but I do expect quite a bit out of myself and those around me. It's sometimes awfully easy to see when someone has too much on their plate as their work suffers and they're always stressed out. Seeing that in yourself is the trick. Give yourself a long inward look and ask yourself if you might need to reduce your workload. Also, it's a good idea to do this before you agree to take something new on. Stay fit. Exercise. A healthy lifestyle can do a whole lot toward relieving stress. I know I feel my best and my least stressed after a very draining soccer or kickball game. Join a club, go out for a run or make time on your Sunday afternoon to kick a ball around with friends. It can help in so many ways. It's important to find activities that work for you. I'm not sure competitive sports is for everyone, for example. The idea is to do something that gets you active, even if it's just going for a walk every day at lunch. Get clean and organized one of the reasons people are so interested in David Allen's Getting Things Done and other, similar productivity programs is their promise to keep you less stressed. One of the ways these systems help you do that is by helping your wacation days and getting away from the office and its stress on a regular basis. Don't work through the weekend. In fact, you might try and take Fridays off!Lifehacker pal and all-around productive guy Ryan Carson has a great idea for being more productive Read moreAs always if anyone reading this has any more tips they'd like to add, that'd be very welcome in the comments or at tips at lifehacker.com. Next up: de-stressing through relaxation.D. Keith Robinson is an associate editor of Lifehacker. By Keith Robinson is an associate editor of Lifehacker. By Keith Robinson is an associate editor of Lifehacker. By Keith Robinson is an associate editor of Lifehacker. By Keith Robinson is an associate editor of Lifehacker. 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The idea is to do something that gets you active, even if it's just going for a walk every day at lunch. Get clean and organized One of the reasons people are so interested in David Allen's Getting Things Done and other, similar productivity programs is their promise to keep you less stressed. One of the ways these systems help you do that is by helping you keep organized. A tidy desk, clean home and organized computer can do wonders for keeping your mind of things that cause stress.by Keith RobinsonRead moreTake time off from work. Make sure you're using your vacation days and getting away from the office and its stress on a regular basis. Don't work through the weekend. In fact, you might try and take Fridays off! Lifehacker pal and allaround productive guy Ryan Carson has a great idea for being more productive Read moreAs always if anyone reading this has any more tips they'd like to add, that'd be very welcome in the comments or at tips at lifehacker.com. Next up: de-stressing through relaxation.D. Keith Robinson is an associate editor of Lifehacker. His special feature Getting To Done appears every Monday on Lifehacker. Battling stress can be as simple as ordering fish at a restaurant. On The Truth About Food, a program on the Discovery Health Channel, researchers measured hormone levels in London cabdrivers, who have highly stressful jobs. When put on a diet of four portions a week of oily fish like mackerel, a source of omega-3 fatty acids, the drivers produced less of the stress hormone cortisol and more of DHEA, a hormone the body cranks out to combat stress. "When the body sees omega-3 fatty acids, it feels calm," says Oz. Walnuts, flaxseeds, and tofu are other excellent sources. You're sitting on the couch watching The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills reruns—just like last weekend. And instead of becoming absorbed, part of your brain stays focused on the looming deadlines that have been nagging at you at work. Susan Nolen-Hoeksema, a professor of psychology at Yale University and the author of Women Who Think Too Much (Henry Holt), says, "Overthinking without being able to resolve anything draws us deeper into a feeling of being overwhelmed." A pastime that requires you to pay attention or engage with other people—like tackling a new recipe, taking a foreign-language class, or playing tennis—lets you escape from your own spinning head and break the cycle. Admiring a photo of a model or a movie star just as you would a work of art could relieve tension. Half a group of people who viewed photos of females wearing makeup said they were less stressed afterward, according to a study at the University of Louisville in Kentucky. The other half did not report the same benefit, but they didn't feel any worse, says Patrick Pössel, a professor of psychology who conducted the study. The hours your boyfriend and his slacker buddies spend hooked up to an Xbox may have an actual benefit. According to researchers at East Carolina University in Greenville, North Carolina, playing nonviolent video games can decrease stress and improve your mood. "Getting absorbed in games provides a distraction and relaxes the nervous system," explains Carmen Russoniello, a professor at the university. Skip World of Warcraft, even if you love walloping trolls, and choose something like Peggle instead. "The challenge should be difficult enough, but not an added pressure," says Russoniello, a professor at the university.

