

Identify your Type A behaviour on a check list and then make deliberate attempts to 'go against the grain' and alter that behaviour by the following methods:

- 1 Slow down:** Be aware of your obsessional time-directed lifestyle and try to slow down. Deliberately walk or eat slowly, setting aside a specific time period where you have to stay at the dinner table. Try to schedule fewer activities each day.
- 2 Take breaks:** Build into your daily and weekly timetable stress-free 'breathing spaces' where you deliberately try to relax. This might be a five-minute period when you carry out a muscle relaxation exercise or breathing exercise, a walk in the park at lunchtime, or a break where you read the newspaper. Plan regular holidays and if possible get away to a different environment.
- 3 Commit yourself to hobbies:** As part of an effort to broaden yourself and reduce obsessional time-directed behaviour, deliberately develop leisure activities and hobbies, for example, sailing, gardening, walking or sewing. Commit yourself fully to these activities. Try to engage in uncompetitive trivial activities just for fun.
- 4 Express feelings:** Try to adopt a more positive approach to expressing yourself and how you feel. Take time to thank others and show appreciation when somebody has done something for you. Talk to others about how you are feeling – ventilate feelings rather than bottling them up.
- 5 Practice listening:** Search out somebody who talks slowly and deliberately. Have a slow conversation. Try to hold back from making yourself the centre of attention. Ask yourself 'Do I really have anything important to say?'.
- 6 Forget time:** Give yourself occasional breaks where you remove your watch and try to lose your sense of time. Break the habit of always being punctual – deliberately miss a few deadlines or turn up for a meeting five minutes late.
- 7 Manage your hostility:** Identify the triggers – keep a diary. Challenge your rigid thinking, particularly the tendency to use the words 'should', 'must' and 'ought'. Loosen up those thoughts, replace 'should' with 'it would be nice if'. Try occasionally to say to yourself 'it doesn't matter'.
- 8 Learn to relax:** Learn a relaxation technique and try to practice once a day.
- 9 Have a chat:** Make a point of chatting or engaging in small talk or a conversation that has no specific purpose. Slow down. Idle the time away. Try to laugh or make somebody laugh.
- 10 Understand the reasons:** Take time out to assess the cause of your Type A behaviour. Did your parents' approval depend on how successful and achieving you were as a child. Ask yourself, 'What am I trying to prove?' Does your idealism and striving improve or diminish the quality of your life?