

TIPS TO RELIEVE STRESS

1. TAKE A DEEP BREATH

Taking deep breaths produces the relaxation response, which has been shown to slow heartbeat and respiration and can even lower blood pressure. So ... take a deep breath!!!



2. TURN OFF THE NEWS (INCLUDING SOCIAL MEDIA)

A constant diet of social unrest, political turmoil, and never-ending controversies adds to and increases stress. Take a break from the bad news to tamp down the stress level.

3. GO FOR A WALK

Nearly every kind of exercise offers up a host of health-enhancing benefits, including improved mood. Rhythmic exercises like walking, running, bicycling, and swimming trigger the relaxation response.

4. GIVE YOURSELF A BREAK

Often we're our own worst critic - and the source of stress generated by our failure to achieve our impossibly high standards. Adopting realistic expectations can greatly ease levels of stress.

5. CONNECT WITH OTHERS

Reach out to family members and tell them you're having a hard time. Call a friend and schedule a "date". Volunteer. Meet others through taking classes, participating in political campaigns, attending religious services, or joining an interest group.

6. CLEAR THE DECK OF ONE TIME-CONSUMING HOUSEHOLD TASK.

Evaluate which tasks are essential and which could take a backseat right now. Hire a housecleaning or lawncare service. Pay a teen to work around the house or yard or help a child with homework.

7. ENROLL IN A YOGA or TAI CHI CLASS

These exercises involve slow, gentle, flowing movements, rhythmic breathing, and meditation. Regular involvement releases muscle tension and enhances tranquility. Tai chi is especially beneficial for those who are unaccustomed to exercising.



8. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

Sometimes we neglect the basics when we're get stressed. We forget to eat. Or we "stress eat" ... junk food that we know isn't good for us. Eating healthy food, getting a good night's sleep, taking care of ourselves - makes us feel more able to cope with the challenges we face.

9. DO SOMETHING YOU ENJOY

Work in the yard. Bake. Go fishing. Dance. Watch "you tube" videos. Listen to music. Take up knitting. Gel pen a page in an adult coloring book. Work a crossword puzzle ... or a jigsaw puzzle. Play *Sudoku* ... or *Solitaire*. It doesn't matter what you do as long as YOU enjoy it AND you DO IT!!!



10. REPLACE "SHOULD" and "MUST" WITH "IT WOULD BE NICE IF..."

I "should" do ... xyz becomes "It would be nice if I did xyz"

I "must" finish this becomes "It would be nice if" I finished this.

The natural conclusion when the "should"s and "must" s are replaced is "but it won't be the end of the world if I don't do Xyz." The weight of the world lifted.

Instant stress relief.

14. PET A DOG (OR CAT)

The sensory act of petting a dog or even a warm, fluffy rabbit has been shown to lower blood pressure and reduce the stress hormone, cortisol.



12. GIVE YOURSELF A PEP TALK

A stream of positive thoughts can drown out negative ones. Write down a message that calms you down. Place them in a prominent place. The more you see and repeat an affirmation, the more likely you are to believe it and act on it. Try: "I can do this"; "This, too, shall pass"; "I will get through this;" "I am calm;" "One day at a time;" "I can relax."

11. WRITE IT OUT

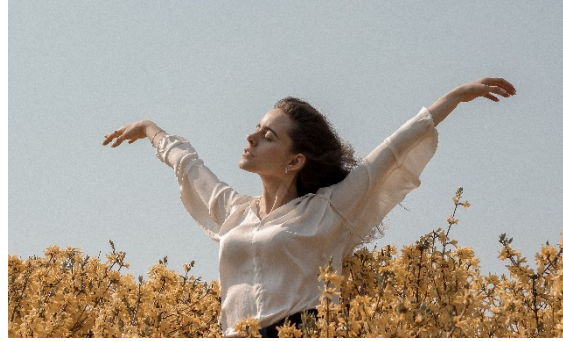
Writing about stressful events relieves stress much the same way that talking about it does. Write about an event that bothers you most. Write down what you feel and why you feel that way. Don't worry about grammar or spelling. (Remember, you're writing for yourself – no one else. So really let go!)

13. WATCH A FUNNY MOVIE

Research shows that laughter lowers the amount of circulating stress hormones, adrenaline and cortisol. So watch a comedy club routine on you tube, read a funny book, embrace the absurd in daily life.

15. LISTEN TO SOOTHING MUSIC

The ease of downloading music brought about by the advent of i-pods and other smart devices enables one to access calming music in an instant. One can simply ask *Alexa* to “play calming music” or check out some on “*you tube*”.



16. GET A MASSAGE

A massage at the hands of a skilled practitioner but can lower blood pressure, heart rate and levels of cortisol, as well as relieve muscle tension. You can find an experienced practitioner through professional organizations like the *American Massage Therapy Association* (www.amtamassage.org).



18. CONNECT WITH NATURE.

Certainly, escapes to the beach, mountains, or lake are no-brainers, but for options closer to home, try heading to the park or a nature reserve. Even a walk through the blooming areas of a garden center can be relaxing, especially if they have flowing fountain displays amid the greenery.

19. ADOPT A POSITIVE ATTITUDE

Our lives and happiness are influenced less by what happens to us than how we choose to think about what happens to us. Those who approach situations with a positive view tend to live longer and feel happier and less stressed.

17. MEDITATE.

Mindful meditation can reduce stress and anxiety. Set aside 5 minutes in a quiet place and breathe. Focus on the present moment. If stray thoughts intrude, acknowledge them, and then let them go. Don't judge yourself for any mental wavering. Gently re-focus and bring the attention back to the present moment.

20. KEEP A GRATITUDE JOURNAL

Keeping a gratitude journal has been shown to elevate mood and ease stress and anxiety. Keep a journal in which you record each night three items for which you are grateful. Just try feeling dismal after that!

