
Strategies for Transforming Stress

You can't avoid stress, but you can manage it. Many simple relaxation strategies can help you transform stress. When you practice them every day, they will become healthy habits. Learning to adapt well in the face of challenges can bolster your energy reserves, support your health, and improve your quality of life.

Why Stress Relief Matters

Stress is one of the top health concerns of the 21st century—and for a good reason. The majority of visits to primary care doctors are due, in part, to the effects of chronic stress. For example, prolonged stress has been linked to health issues like heart disease, diabetes, and chronic pain. Ongoing stress can also harm your mood, emotions, and energy level.

Studies suggest that practicing relaxation methods can help you cope in a wide variety of situations and may improve health-related symptoms. Some of the symptoms and conditions that stress-relief practices can help with include:

- Anxiety
- Cancer (during and after treatment)
- Caregiver stress
- Childbirth
- Depression
- Diabetes
- Headaches, migraines
- Heart disease
- High blood pressure (hypertension)
- Insomnia
- Job-related stress
- Multiple sclerosis
- Pain control
- Parenting stress
- Parkinson's disease
- Pre-surgery stress
- Quitting smoking
- School-related stress
- Temporomandibular joint dysfunction (TMJ) or jaw pain

Ways to Manage Stress

Many proven stress-relief approaches are listed here. Choose the methods that appeal to you and work them into your daily routine. For example, do 10 minutes of yoga every day during your lunch break. Or, listen to relaxing music for 15 minutes every night before bed.

- Go for a walk or do other physical activities you enjoy
- Journal about things you are grateful for
- Use a free gratitude app online

- Listen to music that relaxes you
- Dance to your favorite music
- Diffuse a soothing essential oil, such as sweet orange or lavender, in your home or car
- Give yourself a foot massage
- Enjoy a warm water footbath with lavender essential oil
- Take 5 minutes to focus on breathing deeply
- Visualize in detail a scene that relaxes you, such as the beach, mountains, or a flower garden
- Spend time with a pet
- Talk with supportive friends or family
- Try yoga, tai chi, or qigong
- Journal about a challenging situation
- Connect with nature, such as by gardening, hiking, or feeding birds
- Be creative, such as by coloring, painting, woodworking, knitting, scrapbooking, or other crafting
- Sit in a sauna or soak in a hot tub
- Get a professional massage or swap massages with a partner that you trust
- Enjoy a funny movie or book
- Try a laughter yoga session, such as by joining others to imitate different types of laughs
- Spend time in spiritual or religious practices

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