

# *Time Tested Stress-Management Tips*

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## **Stress Tip # 1. Flush The Stress Hormones Away**

Walk, jog, bike, or swim each day. Exercise, in any form, is a stress to the body, but... it's "good stress" that negates the negative stress created from long traffic commutes, unending office work or common life stressors. Regular physical exercise helps reduce resting blood pressure and flushes out the stress hormones that wreak havoc on the body if/when they tend to linger for days. When you think you cannot afford the time to exercise is when you need it the most! Exercise is the next best thing to the fountain of youth!

## **Stress Tip # 2. Reset Your Body Clock:**

Reset your body's clock by stepping out of the office or worksite and step into nature; a park, a riverbank, a greenhouse, a garden, even the nearest floral shop. Time spent in front of a computer—days on end—will slowly rattle your nerves on end. Recalibrate your body's rhythms to the rhythms of the natural world—every day if possible. Surround yourself in the company of trees, flowers and wildlife no matter where you live or work.

## **Stress Tip # 3. Tense Muscle Relief:**

A massage, of any kind, relieves muscular tension. Muscle tension is the number one symptom of stress, whether it's sitting in traffic or in your workspace cubicle. Over time, muscle tension distorts body posture; it even compromises some organ functions. Swedish massage, Shiatsu, Rolfing, reflexology, or sports massage all have one goal; to relieve muscle tension and restore your sense of inner peace. What was once regarded as a luxury years ago is now considered a necessity in the fast-paced, information age we live in. Schedule a massage this week.

## **Stress Tip # 4. Hydrotherapy:**

A hot bath, a Jacuzzi or even a long hot shower at the end of a day offers a literal and symbolic means to wash away problems. The water's heat relaxes neural endings (both skin and muscle) to induce a deep sense of relaxation to mind, body and spirit. Mineral salts and bath oils enhance the experience. Hydrotherapy is a great idea for those who have problems sleeping at night. Step into a pool of hot water tonight and let the temperature melt your problems away.

## **Stress Tip # 5. Life Unplugged:**

Listening to newscasts that hype stressful national and international events for ratings only increase the stress (fight or flight) response. Repeated exposure to negativity increases blood pressure and muscle tension. During rush hour commutes as well as the dinner hour, make a habit to unplug from the hardcore newscasts that sensationalize fear. If something important occurs, trust that a friend will keep you informed and enjoy dedicated moments of silence. Briefly unplugging from all technology each day offers a respite to mind, body and spirit.

**Stress Tip # 6. Breathe Deep!**

Taking a big sigh not only clears the lungs, it clears the mind, if only momentarily, of the stress at hand whether it's with traffic, staff meetings or rude people. Under duress people tend to take short shallow breaths (or worse, hold their breath unknowingly. The latter contributes to hypertension.) Deep abdominal breaths is the most relaxing way to breathe. Remind yourself regularly to breathe deep and enjoy the inner peace of a deep sigh.

**Stress Tip #7. Establish Healthy Boundaries:**

Take a periodic mental health day from stress by establishing a healthy boundary between your work and your personal life. A lifestyle that is "on-demand" 24/7 is unsustainable for optimal health. Time and space away from work responsibilities often gives a fresh perspective on problems too, but you can't get this perspective without healthy boundaries. Be assertive! Create and enforce healthy boundaries in your life.

**Stress Tip #8. Get A Good Night's Sleep:**

Down pillows and 1,000-thread count sheets are a great start to a good night's sleep but don't stop there. Remove any and all items that contribute to poor sleep hygiene... and keep a pen and pad of paper by the night stand to write down consuming thoughts that steal precious moments of quality sleep. Stress (a busy mind) is cited as the leading cause of insomnia. Minimize your stress and maximize your sleep potential. A good night's sleep boosts the immune system too!

**Stress Tip # 9. Furry Friends to the Rescue:**

Love is the greatest cure for stress and pets offer loving support in many ways. Holding a kitten, rubbing a dog's stomach or receiving a surprise kiss from a furry friend warms any heart and takes the edge off a bad day. We all need to be loved as well as express love regularly. If stress is life's toxin, than love is the antidote and house pets offer an unlimited supply of this cure.

**Stress Tip # 10. Tickle Your Funny Bone (Humor Therapy):**

Humor heals a stressful mind. Make a point to find one funny thing to laugh at each day. Keep on the lookout for things that tickle your funny bone (e.g., jokes, photos, birthday cards, etc.). Collect them in a tickler notebook and refer to it often as your humor resource. Irony, parody, satire, blue collar, white collar or no collar; laughter is great medicine for mind, body and spirit. Remember to avoid sarcasm as it only promotes stress. Laughter is good medicine.

### **Stress Tip #11. Music Therapy (for the Commute)**

Music, it is said, soothes the savage beast. Instrumental music (without words) soothes it best. Make a new play list of 20 soothing pieces of instrumental music that you know calms your nerves. Consider playing this relaxing musical set during long slow commutes home from work, or perhaps once you get home as a great way to unwind. Consider piano solos, Hawaiian slack-key guitar, violin concertos Spanish flamenco, and Icelandic folk music. Explore new melodies that give your mind a mini-vacation and soothe the savage beast that resides in you when tension runs high.

### **Stress Tip #12. Meditation: It's not what you think:**

Our world today is a perpetual torrent of sensory bombardment. Bits and bytes of information ricochet around our brains contributing significantly to burnout, also known as information overload. A running commentary soundtrack by one's own ego only adds to this cacophony. Meditation, known to world-class athletes as "mental training," is nothing more than a badly needed rest stop on the information super highway. It also helps increase attention span. Find a quiet place each morning, close your eyes for 5-10 minutes and think of nothing but your breathing (with long slow deep breaths). Your mind will thank you. Your body will too!

### **Stress Tip # 13. Friends in Need**

There are times to cherish solitude, and there are times to cherish good friends and family. Friends help cushion the fall of a stressful day. We don't need many friends, but we do need a handful of close friends to bond with and feel supported by in tough times. The hustle-bustle of life can often leave people with many virtual friends, but few people to call up and socialize with. Consider organizing a potluck dinner party or a small gathering of your friends and celebrate life's simple pleasures.

### **Stress Tip # 14. Create a Relaxation Survival Kit**

Stressful times call for clever measures! We take in information through our five senses. Too much information overloads the system: STRESS! We can also use the five senses to relax. Consider gathering items to soothe the body through sight, sound, taste, touch and smell (two per sense) and create a relaxation survival kit; a first aid kit for stressful times. Items in your kit might include a vial of lavender (smell), a Hawaiian Beach post card (sight), a classical CD (sound), bubble wrap (touch), and some Belgian chocolate truffles (taste). Make one for the home and office. Don't forget to replace the chocolate!

### **Stress Tip #15. Eat for a Healthy Immune System**

Chronic stress tends to suppress the immune system through the overactive role of Cortisol (the primary stress hormone). Basic living depletes essential nutrients. Chronic stress depletes them even quicker. Good quality foods can help negate the far reaches of stress to bring your immune system back into balance. Organic fruits and vegetables and free-range meats are the best sources of food to build a healthy immune system.