



Stress Relief

Work out—Exercise helps to burn off stress-related chemicals and releases mind-relaxing endorphins. It also strengthens your heart to help prevent the damage that stress can cause. “Research by Robert Thayer, Ph.D., professor of psychology at California State University, Long Beach, showed that 30 minutes of intense aerobic exercise immediately reduces body tension--and it does so even more effectively than moderate exercise such as walking.”

Prioritize—It often seems as though that list of things to do is endless. It often is. One solution is to prioritize. At the beginning of each day, choose the most important task and complete it. Getting it done will give a sense of accomplishment. Then choose no more than 5 items on your to-do list. If you finish them, then you can make a second 5-item list.

Delegate—Learn to delegate some of your tasks to friends, co-workers, and family members. You don't have to do it ALL yourself.

Say no—“Stressed-out people often can't assert themselves,” says Joan Lerner, Ph.D., a counselling psychologist at the University of Pennsylvania Counselling Service in Philadelphia. “And so they swallow things. Instead of saying 'I don't want to do this' or 'I need some help,' they do it all themselves. Then they have even more to do.” Saying “no” may be difficult at first, but it will be worth it in the long run.

Give yourself more time—Allot yourself more time to accomplish each task as it will usually take you longer than you anticipate. Try to give yourself 20% more time than you think you're going to need.

Work on your posture—Sitting and standing up straight improves your breathing and increases blood flow to the brain. Slouching does the opposite.

Squeeze—Keep a stress ball or hand exerciser in your desk at work to squeeze when you need it. When stress causes adrenaline to increase, it calls for muscle action.

Take a hot soak—On the opposite side of things, relaxing your muscles in a nice hot bath or hot tub for 15 minutes at about 100° to 101°F.

HahahaTeeheehee—Laughter relaxes tense muscles, brings more oxygen into your system, and lowers blood pressure. Read or watch something funny. Call a friend to share some funny stories. Even forcing a laugh can help get you started.

Take a holiday—If you can't actually get away, imagine a mini-vacation. Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and picture yourself on your dream vacation--feel the sensations, hear the sounds, and smell the aromas of your dreamland.

Listen to relaxing sounds—Soothing music or sounds of nature can help you to relax.

Put yourself first—Some people tend to do things for other people all day. We find it difficult to make time for ourselves, but if you are constantly giving away energy, you need to find a way to get some back. Every day, set aside some time for yourself to do something you enjoy, not just stuff you have to do.

Breathe—Any deep breathing will help, but for something more specific, see the exercise below:

1. Sit comfortably on the edge of a chair with your back straight. Place feet flat on the floor and keep legs hip-width apart. Rest hands on top of thighs.
2. Quiet your mind and become aware of your breath.
3. Bring hands palms up and fingertips pointing toward each other with elbows rounded.
4. Keep hands palms up and slowly raise arms in front of body. Breathe in deeply through your nose and imagine a bright white light bathing your lungs.
5. Continue to raise arms with palms up until you reach level of throat. Then turn hands, thumbs toward you and continue to rotate wrists until palms again face up toward the sky and push hands up toward the sky. Press arms up over the head, keeping elbows slightly bent. As you press your arms upward, exhale through your mouth while making the sound “ssssssss” (like a leaking tire) with the breath. Exhale until you can no longer breathe out. While exhaling, imagine the colour grey leaving your lungs and breathe out sadness and grief.
6. Slowly return to original posture and refocus mind back to lungs. Repeat 6, 9, or 18 times.

Taken from “Taoist Ways to Transform Stress into Vitality” by Mantak Chia

Get help—When stress becomes too much or is making you ill, seek out qualified help. Find a health professional (or more than one) that you feel comfortable with. Each practitioner will have his or her own tools to help you optimize your health and well-being.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) & Stress

The most fundamental principle of TCM is to restore balance. Stress is meant to be a temporary condition to get us out of harm’s way. When it becomes chronic, it can hurt us and make existing imbalances worse.

TCM is a holistic practice—regarding the body, emotions, and mind to be interconnected. The therapies we use keep this under consideration. Acupuncture has been shown to increase the release of anti-stress, feel-good endorphins. Many patients fall asleep during treatment and report feeling very relaxed afterward. Acupuncture has also been acknowledged by the World Health Organization (WHO) to be effective in treating many diseases and symptoms. Several TCM herbs, including Korean ginseng (ren shen), Siberian ginseng (wu jia shen – an adrenal supportive), and schizandra berries (wu wei zi) to be adaptogenics, meaning they help the body to adapt to various stressors. It is important to have a qualified practitioner determine what herbs are appropriate for you. Exercises like tai chi and qi gong involve slow, focused movements and proper breathing, and have been shown to improve health as well as relieve tension. Good nutrition is also essential. In order for the body to recover and build strong and healthy cells, the correct nutrients are necessary. Every person is different, so each individual has different needs.

It is unlikely that you’ll be able to eliminate all the stresses from your life, but you can certainly learn how to cope, how to reduce those stresses, and how to improve your overall health.