



Top Ten Tips for Stress Relief

1. Punch a Pillow

Are you feeling irritable, angry or emotionally pent-up? Get it out of your system! Release internalized emotions by punching a punching bag, a cushion or your pillow. Let your emotions out while doing so safely in private, or try yelling in your car.

2. Move It!

Take a break and take a brisk walk. You can escape man-made stress by going outside and getting back to nature, as in the Taoist tradition. Move your body. Exercise releases endorphins, which are natural mood-enhancers.

3. Fight Tension With Tension

Do you have insomnia? Having trouble getting physically comfortable because you're so tense? Use Cindy Albon's quick version of progressive muscle relaxation. Start by tensing your toes and feet. Tighten your calves, then your thighs, buttocks, back and abdomen. Clench your fists, tense your arms, scrunch up your shoulders, and make a silent scream with your face. Now take a deep breath and let it all go. Feel your body drop into the bed as you slowly exhale the tension of the day.

4. Let Music Soothe the Savage Beast

Put on your favorite music and sing along to release all that frustration. Be silly and sing, even if you're no Luciano Pavarotti! Do it in the car, where no one can hear you if you're concerned about your vocal ability. Do you play an instrument? Pick it up and get lost in the moment. The vibration of music is a powerful healing therapy. If you prefer listening to music, there are plenty of relaxation CDs or ones with nature sounds to slow down your rhythm while raising your vibration.

5. Breathe In the Good and Out the Bad

Is your heart racing, or does your chest feel tight? You may be breathing shallowly, or even holding your breath while holding in tension. Try a qi gong deep-breathing technique to relieve stress. Sit straight in a chair, and place both hands on your lower abdomen below the navel, an area called the *dan tien*. Imagine breathing into this area. Close your eyes, and breathing through your nose, exhale all the air. Then inhale into your lower abdomen, feeling it expand against your hands. Imagine a golden ball of energy glowing in the *dan tien*. When you are feeling stressed, take a few moments to do three *dan tien* deep breaths to relax.

6. Laugh It Off

Have you seen the movie *Eat Pray Love*? Then you may remember the advice from the healer to "smile with your liver." Stress disrupts the free flow of the *qi* (vital energy) of the liver. Smile, even if you don't feel like it. You will feel your energy change as your body chemistry changes with smiling. Using the muscles involved in smiling tells your brain to reassess your mood. A master teacher of Asian medicine in Beijing once was asked, "What is your advice for a healthy, long life?" Laughing, he answered simply, "Good mood." Watch a comedy. Read jokes. Or tell them to someone else! As is often repeated, laughter is the best medicine.

7. Now and Zen

Stop the cascading dominoes of thinking, thinking, thinking. Be still and quiet your mind for just a few minutes. Chant a word or phrase that holds special resonance for you. Watch a candle burn. Listen to a guided meditation. Focus only on the present moment, letting go of anxieties and allowing positive possibilities to heal your spirit. Relax your mind, and your body will follow. Visualize yourself at your favorite vacation spot or place in nature, and remember the relaxation you felt there. Anxiety comes from the "what ifs." Focus on the "right nows." Tell yourself that in this moment you feel fine, everything is OK, and all is exactly as it should be.

8. Put It on Paper

Journaling your thoughts is an effective way to get them out of your mind. Write about your situation, how you feel, whatever may be troubling you. Then put it all aside for a day. Take a fresh look later, and you may find an objective viewpoint and solution to your troubles. You can take the writing and burn it in a safe place, watching the smoke rise and the ashes drift away to carry off strong negative emotions. Then follow this with a positive affirmation that the situation is changing for the better. Some people have also found they can "chill out" the energy of the situation by putting their writing into the freezer!

9. Attitude of Gratitude

Be happy, be grateful, and the cells in your body will thank you with wellness. If you're stressed about not having enough money, not having a job, hating your job, or having to work too much, or if you're having negative thoughts of "I don't have..." or "I don't like..." then start thinking about what you *do* have and *do* like. Make a gratitude list of all the things you love about your life. It really brings things into perspective and changes your viewpoint. Don't sweat the small stuff, and remember, it's *all* small stuff.

10. Acupressure Relieves the Pressure

There are four points on the body which sedate and balance mind, body and spirit. *Hegu* is located at the junction of the thumb and index finger on the back of the hand. *Taichong* is similarly located at the junction of the big toe and second toe on the top of the foot. *Baihu* is on the crown of the head, midway between each ear. *Yintang* is between the eyebrows, in the area known as the third eye. Press each point for a few minutes for quick relief from stress.

For the ultimate in stress release, get away from it all with a relaxing session at WellStream Acupuncture. Call for your appointment today.

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