

Stress Relievers

Most people seem to approach their lives as something that happens to them, rather than something that they create with their thoughts and actions.

They allow their lives to happen to them, not knowing how much stress they are internalizing. Eventually, they become accustomed to the knots in their stomachs and the tension in their necks.

We seem to have forgotten that there might be a different way to live.

Some people don't realize this until their physician says, "your time on earth seems to be running out." Only then, will they begin to take a closer look at their lives and start making changes.

The good news is that you can do a great deal stop toxic emotions such as chronic stress and anxiety from fueling deadly and painful diseases.

There is a lot you can do today to improve your physical health by addressing first and foremost your emotional health.

I. Instant Stress Relievers

1. Breathe Deeply

When you're anxious or angry, you tend to have high-intensity, fast-paced breathing.

Breathing deeply helps you go from emergency state to relaxation state. It helps you go from feeling anxious to calm.

Step 1: Place one hand on your belly and inhale through your nose. Direct the breath to the belly feel your belly expand.

Step 2: Fill your belly to what you can comfortably hold.

Step 3: Exhale slowly and smoothly through your nose.

Step 4: Repeat ten times or as many times as you need to regulate your breathing and calm your nerves.

The goal is to allow deep breathing become a second nature to you.

2. Meditate

Meditation doesn't need to be complex or complicated.

Just sit, breathe deeply and slowly, and focus on your breath.

Try not to let the mind wander. If it does, just bring it back to the breath.

You can help yourself relax by focusing on the things you're grateful for or repeating a simple mantra with each inhale and exhale, such as "I am relaxed," or, "I am grounded."

3. Practice Grounding Techniques

Grounding anchors us safely in the present moment.

Standing Grounding

1. Stand with feet shoulder-width apart.
2. Slowly rock forward and sense weight over the balls of your feet.
3. Then rock backward and sense the weight shifting to your heels.
4. Stand tall, with relaxed shoulders, straight spine, uplifted chin, and expanded chest, and imagine that your legs are the trunk of a tree, and roots grow deeply into the ground from your feet, giving you a sense of security.

Grounding In The Body

1. Place one hand on your heart and experiment with different kinds of touch – firm, soothing, etc. – until you find the kind of touch feels best.
2. Place the other hand over your belly and take your time to track sensations.

4. Create a Personal Affirmation

Choose a personal affirmation for yourself and declare it ten times each morning. Affirmations are positive, in the present tense statement such as “I am at peace.” Self-affirmation has been proven to enhance performance and improve problem-solving under stress.

5. Throw Open a Window

Let some sunlight in and enjoy the weather. Don't let bad weather put you off, even rain or snow can be as refreshing for your soul as the bright sunlight.

6. Write Your Worries Down

Whether it was a to-do list or worries, writing things down takes them off of your mind. Writing your worries down also helps you put them into perspective and helps you think about them more rationally.

7. Ask Yourself "Would It Matter a Year From Now?"

This is a good strategy to deal with anger, but it also works for other emotions such as jealousy.

8. Listen to Classics

Research revealed that listening to classics such as Pachelbel and Vivaldi helped people relax much more quickly and lower their stress levels.

In contrast, listening to pop or jazz music had the same restorative effect as total silence.

9. Allow More Humor Into Your Life

Laughing has been proven to instantly boost your mood and improve your health.

So make sure to get your regular dose of humor by watching a funny video or any other humorous material.

Researchers recommend that people laugh for at least fifteen minutes every day.

10. Drink Herbal Tea

A cup of herbal tea can be therapeutic with benefits that will help you not only temper anxiety and stress but be a healthier person all around, such as:

- * Helping you stay hydrated unlike the diuretic properties of excess coffee.

- * Soothing achy cold and flu symptoms. When you're feeling under the weather, try teas with ginger, rosehip, or chamomile.
- * Certain herbal teas, such as chamomile and lemon balm have a calming effect that is linked to stress reduction.
- * Ginger tea can reduce nausea and calm an upset stomach.
- * Lavender tea helps you relax and induces sleep.

11. Enjoy Some Dark Chocolate

Studies show that consuming dark chocolate that has a high concentration of cacao (minimally 70% cacao, 30% organic cane sugar) has positive effects on stress levels, inflammation, mood, memory and immunity.

12. Move Your Body

Other than controlling your weight and reducing your risk of cardiovascular disease, regular exercise helps you channel your anxious feelings, and prevent future ones.

There are different fun and inspiring ways to move. The key is to find a way that works for you, one that you love or at least enjoy.

13. Get Some Sunlight

Research shows that spending more than thirty minutes outside when the weather is pleasant, helped people boost their mood and improve their memory.

14. Spend Time With People You Love

Studies show that people who enjoy healthy, supportive relationships are happier and less stressed than those who don't.

A study published in the American Journal of Epidemiology, shows that individuals who lacked social and community ties were two to three times more likely to die prematurely than those who were well connected.

Develop more healthy and supportive relationships, while avoiding those that are toxic.

15. Pet Your Stress Away

Several studies have been conducted that examine how you can benefit from owning or spending time with pets.

These studies show that dog owners coped well with everyday stress, had higher self-esteem, and were less likely to get depressed.

However, when it comes to cats, studies show that although living with a cat may help alleviate negative mood but isn't likely to make you feel especially good.

One of the main reasons why dog can improve the quality of your life can be the exercise associated with daily walking, which can benefit your physical and mental health.

Another explanation could be the possibility of meeting new people while walking your dog. Strangers are more likely to approach you when you're walking a dog than when you're alone.

If your lifestyle isn't compatible with owning a dog, you can go online and watch a video of a cute animal. It was proven to help people feel much more relaxed and reduce their stress levels.

16. Get a Massage

Studies show that a massage increases the circulation, relaxes the muscles, and aids digestion. But it can also create a sense of love, warmth and security and help us relax.

17. Candles

A candle light can bring a sense of coziness and warmth to your home. To add to the effect, choose a scented candle like pine or vanilla.

(Never leave a candle unattended; and be sure that the flame is at a safe distance from any object or material, whether flammable or not.)

18. Praying For Others

One study conducted by Neal Krause at the University of Michigan revealed that praying for others helped reduce the financial stresses and improved the well-being of the person doing the praying. In fact, our subconscious mind doesn't make the difference between wishing well to ourselves or to others.

So when you wish well for others, you benefit too.

19. Finding Benefits

Distracting yourself by watching something funny, or doing something you enjoy may help reduce your feelings of anger, but it is unlikely to provide a long-term solution to more serious sources of frustration.

“Benefit finding”, on the other hand, can provide a lasting solution for feelings of anger and frustration.

In fact, in one study, participants were asked to focus on the benefits that came from unfortunate experiences, including, for example, becoming a wiser or mentally stronger person.

The results revealed that the act of focusing on the benefits that could be derived from a seemingly hurtful experience, helped participants feel significantly more forgiving and less upset and angry about the situation.

Finding benefits has also helped people with serious physical illness feel empowered and increase their appreciation for life.

So when you experience an event that makes you feel angry or upset, spend a few minutes reflecting on the positive outcomes of the event.

For example, maybe it helped you grow stronger or become more appreciative of your life. Maybe it helped strengthen important relationships or end bad ones. Maybe it helped you become more forgiving or compassionate.

Write down how you have benefited from the event.

II. Lifestyle Changes to Reduce Stress

1. Wake Up Naturally

Wake up without an alarm clock, at least on the weekend. If you're a night owl at heart, allow yourself to have a weekend lie-in.

2. Drink More Water

A lack of hydration can affect all your body functions. It can cause dry skin, headaches, poor concentration, etc. Make sure you have enough water every day.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine determined that an adequate daily fluid intake is: About 15.5 cups (3.7 liters) of fluids for men. About 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) of fluids a day for women.

3. Use Colors Strategically

Colors can affect your mood. Cooler colors like green, blue, and purple, tend to be calming, and are usually calming and soothing.

Warmer colors like red, orange, and yellow, on the other hand, tend to be stimulating and often evoke feelings of happiness, optimism and energy.

4. Clear out Your Clutter

Clutter can add to your stress. Sort out your wardrobe, drawers, and cupboards and set aside anything you don't use or you don't need anymore.

Donate what can be donated, recycle what you can, and throw the rest.

5. Start a Garden

Studies show that Adding greenery in the form of a garden can reduce stress even lessen pain in some instances, according to Texas A&M University authority on health care design.

Even if you can't have a garden, get some pots and add more greenery to your home and workplace.

6. Read a Classic Novel before bed

Reading a classic novel before you go to bed can help combat insomnia. A 2009 study from researchers at University of Sussex revealed that six minutes of reading reduces stress by 68% (more relaxing than either music or a cup of tea), thus clearing the mind and readying the body for sleep.

7. Get Enough Sleep

Lack of sleep causes irritability and moodiness, decreased attention span, fatigue, and headaches. Long-term effects of lack of sleep include slowed metabolism, which leads to weight gain or diabetes, increased blood pressure, impaired memory, and depression.

Get seven to eight hours of restful sleep every night.

Here are some tips to ensure you get enough sleep every night:

* Lights: Keep your bedroom dark and use nightlights in hallways and bathrooms.

* Sound: If you can't isolate your room from the noise, purchase a white noise machine to help mask the noise or use earplugs.

* Linens and Sleepwear: Use quality linens on your bed and sleep in

comfortable sleepwear.

* Humidity: Use a humidifier if your room is too dry and a dehumidifier if your room is extremely humid.

* Create a Bedtime Ritual: This will prepare your body and your mind for sleep. A bedtime relaxation ritual can include a bedtime tea, a bath, reading fiction, journaling, etc.

* Eating: Don't eat at least two hours before bedtime to avoid the risk of being kept up by an active digestive tract. Make sure your dinner is well balanced, and not too high in fat or simple carbohydrates (sugars and foods made with refined flour) and avoid eating foods that cause acid reflux, or excessive gas, or any other discomfort.

* Fluids: To avoid having to run to the bathroom several times during the night, make sure you avoid drinking a lot of liquid two to three hours before bedtime.

8. Transform Your Journey to Work

Use the opportunity to read, or listen to audio books. You can also use your commute to add more physical activity to your day. If you can, walk or bike, or park farther. Use the stairs instead of the elevator.

9. Give Up Your Seat

A simple act of kindness, not only brightens someone's day, but also brightens yours. It will boost your mood considerably.

10. Try Something New

It can be joining a dancing class, learning a new language, etc. exposing yourself to unfamiliar experiences helps stretch your mental and physical

horizons. It opens you to change and helps you loosen the grip of routine.

11. Forgive Freely

Holding a grudge affects the cardiovascular and nervous systems. In one study, people who focused on a personal grudge had elevated blood pressure and heart rates, as well as increased muscle tension and feelings of being less in control.

When asked to imagine forgiving the person who had hurt them, the participants said they felt more positive and relaxed and thus, the changes dissipated.

12. Do Less, Experience More

Living in a fast-paced world has put us under the constant pressure to do more in less time. As a result, we find little time to appreciate and enjoy the experience of being alive.

Reduce the number of your commitments. Slow down and take some time for yourself.

13. Be Kind to Yourself

“If your compassion does not include yourself, it is incomplete.” – Buddha

Be aware of your inner critic. Forgive your own mistakes and always speak to yourself in a kind manner.

14. See Life As a Journey – Not a Destination

When you focus on the destination (your future goals), you become anxious about your progress and how long it takes to reach your goals. Journey consciousness, on the other hand, allows you to appreciate the lessons that come to you along the way. You become more peaceful.

15. Act “As If”

Fake it, until you make it. Your mind is very suggestible. If you act as if you're happy and free of stress, you'll find yourself becoming exactly that.

One study revealed that facial expressions have a small impact on feelings.

For example, smiling makes people feel happier, scowling makes them feel angrier, and frowning makes them feel sadder.

16. Match Your Values and Goals

When there's a gap between your goals and your values, you will feel unfulfilled.

If you value your relationships more than having a career, spending more time working isn't going to bring you fulfillment.

17. Practicing Gratitude

Gratitude is one of the main resilience skills.

Practicing gratitude is about noticing and feeling heartfelt appreciation, awe, and wonder for all of the good things in life. This also includes the mistakes and hardships that taught us valuable lessons.

Robert Emmons and Michael McCullough (2003), gratitude researchers, have

found that the intentional practice of gratitude helps improve job and relationship satisfaction, and reduces pain, fatigue, inflammation, and depressive symptoms.

Shifting your attention to the good things in life is a powerful way to lift mood and feel joy.

How Can You Cultivate Gratitude?

1. Keep a Gratitude Journal

Every day, list up to five things you are grateful for from the previous twenty-four hours.

You can briefly describe each item of your list, and write about how it made you feel and what it means to you.

The point is to savor the feelings as you reminisce.

You might write about:

* Funny or pleasant moments (such as the time you spent with a loved one, engaging in a hobby, watching a movie, reading a good book, having a supportive conversations, or recalling moments that made you smile)

* Accomplishments (yours and others')

* Something you learned

* Things in progress you're excited about (goals, possibilities to anticipate)

* A random act of kindness (provided by you or by others)

* Personal strengths

* Etc.

You can also add photos, quotations, or other mementos to your journal.

2. Thank Someone

Whether it was someone who performed a random act of kindness towards you or someone who has touched your life for the better, always express your gratitude.

Write a gratitude letter, send gratitude cards, or send a small gift.

Expressing gratitude tends to give a greater burst of happiness than journal writing.

III. Things to Avoid

1. Quit or Reduce Coffee

Caffeine has been referred to as a psychoactive drug.

The American Psychiatric Association has even named four caffeine-related syndromes: caffeine-intoxication, caffeine-induced anxiety disorder, caffeine-induced sleep disorder, and caffeine-related disorder not otherwise specified.

Caffeine is a stimulant that can give us a jolt and a burst of energy.

When you're prone to getting anxious or stressed out, the last thing you need is adding a stimulant.

Step 1: If you're used to drinking two or more cups of coffee a day, start by reducing to one cup a day.

Step 2: If you drink one coffee a day, try switching to decaf for a few weeks.

Step 3: Once you get used to decaf, try switching to a delicious herbal, caffeine-free tea.

2. Put Your Phone on Silent

Social media and apps are designed to over-stimulate our minds, which can create major anxiety in our lives.

Keep your phone on silent and keep it away in the evening or at least two hours before bedtime.

3. Avoid News Overload

The news is filled with negativity, but that's not all there is to this world. Positive things happen too. They just don't get mentioned as much as the negative incidents.

Take a break from the news. If anything important happens you should know about, you would.