



Ten Relaxation Exercises to Reduce Stress

1

Meditate: Sit up straight with both feet on the floor. Close your eyes. Focus your attention on saying-- out loud or silently-- a positive mantra such as "I feel at peace" or "I love myself." Place one hand on your belly to sync the mantra with your breaths. Let any distracting thoughts float by like clouds.

2



Breathe deeply: Take a 5-minute break and focus on your breathing. Sit up straight, eyes closed, with a hand on your belly. Slowly inhale through your nose, feeling the breath start in your abdomen and work its way to the top of your head. Reverse the process as you exhale through your mouth.

3

Be present: Take 5 minutes and focus on only one behavior with awareness. Notice how the air feels on your face when you're walking. Enjoy the texture and taste of each bite of food. When you spend time in the moment and focus on your senses, you should feel less tense.

4

Reach out: Your social circle is one of your best tools for handling stress. Talk to others -- preferably face to face, or at least on the phone. Share what's going on. You can get a fresh perspective while keeping your connection strong.



5

Tune into your body: Mentally scan your body to get a sense of how stress affects it each day. Lie on your back, or sit with your feet on the floor. Start at your toes and work your way up to your scalp, noticing how your body feels.

6



Laugh out loud: A good belly laugh doesn't just lighten the load mentally. It lowers cortisol, your body's stress hormone, and boosts your mood. Lighten up by tuning in to your favorite sitcom or video or chatting with someone who makes you smile.

7

Decompress: Place a warm heat wrap around your neck and shoulders for 10 minutes. Close your eyes and relax your face, neck, upper chest, and back muscles. Remove the wrap, and use a tennis ball or foam roller to massage away tension.

8

Crank up the tunes: Listening to soothing music can lower blood pressure, heart rate, and anxiety. Create a playlist of songs or nature sounds (the ocean, a bubbling brook, birds chirping), and allow your mind to focus on the different melodies, instruments, or singers in the piece. You also can blow off steam by rocking out to more upbeat tunes -- or singing at the top of your lungs!

9

Get moving: You don't have to run in order to get a runner's high. All forms of exercise, including yoga and walking, can ease stress by helping the brain release feel-good chemicals and by giving your body a chance to practice dealing with stress. You can go for a quick walk around the block, take the stairs up and down a few flights, or do some stretching exercises like head rolls and shoulder shrugs.



10

Celebrate: Don't forget to celebrate accomplishments like mastering a new task at work or a new hobby

