

10 Relaxation Techniques That relieves Stress Fast

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WebMD Feature

Reviewed by [Michael W. Smith, MD](#)

Relax. You deserve it, it's good for you, and it takes less time than you think.

1. Meditate

A few minutes of practice per day can help ease [anxiety](#). “Research suggests that daily [meditation](#) may alter the [brain](#)’s neural pathways, making you more resilient to stress,”

It's simple. Sit up straight with both feet on the floor. Close your [eyes](#). Focus your attention on reciting -- 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](#).

“Deep breathing counters the effects of stress by slowing the [heart rate](#) and lowering [blood pressure](#),” ..

3. Be Present

Slow down.

“Take 5 minutes and focus on only one behavior with awareness,” Tutin says. Notice how the air feels on your face when you’re walking and how your feet feel hitting the ground. 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 network 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 In to 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.

“Simply be aware of places you feel tight or loose without trying to change anything,” Tutin says. For 1 to 2 minutes, imagine each deep breath flowing to that body part. Repeat this process as

you move your focus up your body, paying close attention to sensations you feel in each body part.

6. 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.

“Place the ball between your back and the wall. Lean into the ball, and hold gentle pressure for up to 15 seconds. Then move the ball to another spot, and apply pressure,”

7. Laugh Out Loud

A good belly laugh doesn't just lighten the load mentally. It lowers cortisol, your body's stress hormone, and boosts [brain](#) chemicals called endorphins, which help your mood. Lighten up by tuning in to your favorite sitcom or video, reading the comics, or chatting with someone who makes you smile.

8. Crank Up the Tunes

Research shows that 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,”

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 [depression](#) and anxiety 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. Be Grateful

Keep a gratitude journal or several (one by your bed, one in your purse, and one at work) to help you remember all the things that are good in your life.

“Being grateful for your blessings cancels out negative thoughts and worries,” .

Use these journals to savor good experiences like a child's smile, a sunshine-filled day, and good health. Don't forget to celebrate accomplishments like mastering a new task at work or a new hobby.

When you start feeling stressed, spend a few minutes looking through your notes to remind yourself what really matters.

Written or reviewed by a board-certified physician. See - [Medical Review Board](#).

There are many ways to reduce tension and relax, but some are more effective than others. Here are ten stress relievers proven to be among the most effective for the amount of work and time involved. Most can be learned in the time it takes to read this page, and will help you to feel more relaxed almost immediately. And even more exciting, the [stress relief benefits](#) will increase with regular practice. Try as many as you can--there's something here for everyone!



Digital Vision/Getty Images

1. Breathing Exercises

Deep breathing is an [easy stress reliever](#) that has numerous benefits for the body, including relaxing muscles and quieting the mind. [Breathing exercises](#) are especially helpful because you can do them anywhere, and they work quickly so you can de-stress in a flash. The [Karate Breathing Meditation](#) is a great exercise to start with, and this [basic breathing exercise](#) can be done anywhere to help you reverse your [stress response](#), get back to being more proactive (rather than *reactive*), and face stress with [greater resilience](#). [More »](#)



Meditation is a fast-acting stress reliever with benefits that really build over time. JGI/Tom Grill/ Getty Images

2. Meditation

Meditation builds on deep breathing, and takes it a step further. When you [meditate](#), your brain enters an area of functioning that's similar to sleep, but carries some added benefits you can't achieve as well in any other state, and meditation actually allows you to [build](#) greater resilience toward stress over time. (Read more about the [benefits of meditation](#).) Also, the focus on the present moment keeps your mind from working overtime and increasing your stress levels, and from engaging in destructive mental habits such as [rumination](#). Here's an article on [different types of meditation](#) to help you get started. [More »](#)



Using guided imagery, you can see yourself feeling less stressed, and make that feeling a reality. Wesley Hitt/Getty Images

3. Guided Imagery

It takes slightly more time to practice [guided imagery](#), but this is a great way to leave your stress behind for a while and relax your body. Some find it easier to practice than meditation, as it allows more engagement of the conscious mind. You can play natural sounds in the background as you practice, to promote a more immersive experience. [More »](#)



If you can visualize it, you can more easily achieve it. Visualize yourself more relaxed. OJO Images/Getty Images

4. Visualizations

Building on [guided imagery](#), you can also imagine yourself achieving [goals](#) like becoming healthier and more relaxed, doing well at tasks, and handling conflict in better ways. Also, visualizing yourself doing well on tasks you're trying to master actually functions like physical practice, so you can improve your performance through [visualizations](#) as well! [More »](#)



Yoga classes provide exercise and meditation benefits in a socially supportive environment--a trifecta of stress relief!. Assembly/Digital Vision/Getty Images

5. Yoga

[Yoga](#) is one of the oldest self-improvement practices around, dating back over 5 thousand years! It combines the practices of several other [stress management techniques](#) such as breathing, meditation, imagery and movement, giving you a lot of benefit for the amount of time and energy required. Learn more about how to [manage stress with yoga](#). [More »](#)



Self-hypnosis puts you in control of your mind--and your experience of stress. Chad Baker/Getty Images

6. Self-hypnosis

[Self-hypnosis](#) incorporates some of the features of guided imagery and visualizations, with the added benefit of enabling you to communicate directly you're your subconscious mind to enhance your abilities, more easily give up [bad habits](#), feel less pain, more effectively develop [healthier habits](#), and even find answers to questions that may not be clear to your waking mind! It takes some practice and training, but is well worth it. Learn more about [using hypnosis](#) to manage stress in your life. [More »](#)



Exercise carries many benefits to help you to be healthier and happier. FrancescoCorticchia/ Getty Images

7. Exercise

Many people exercise to control weight and get in better physical condition to become more healthy or physically attractive, but exercise and stress management are also closely linked. Exercise provides a distraction from stressful situations, as well as an outlet for frustrations, and gives you a lift via endorphins as well. This article can tell you more about the [stress management benefits of exercise](#), and help you get more active in your daily life. [More »](#)



Sex is a great tension reliever, and stress relief can lead to better sex. It's a win-win!. Jonathan Storey/Getty Images

8. Sex

You probably already know that sex is a great tension reliever, but have you officially thought of it as a stress-relieving practice? Perhaps you should. The physical benefits of sex are numerous, and most of them work very well toward relieving stress. Sadly, many people have *less* sex when their stress levels are high. Learn how to [avoid this trap!](#) [More »](#)



Music is a simple and effective stress reliever that can help you even when you're focused on other things. FrancescoCorticchia/ Getty Images

9. Music

[Music therapy](#) has shown numerous health benefits for people with conditions ranging from mild (like stress) to severe (like cancer). When dealing with stress, the right music can actually lower your [blood pressure](#), relax your body and calm your mind. Here are some suggestions of different types of [music to listen to](#), and how to [use music in your daily life](#) for effective stress management. [More »](#)



Being organized can help you free up your energy for other more important challenges. Here's where to begin!. Jonathan Kitchen/Getty Images

10. Get Organized

Although getting organized and staying organized is not often thought of as a [stress management technique](#) per se, this is an activity that can reduce the stress you face in your life, and can even be calming as you are engaged in the act. (See how [cleaning can be a stress reliever in itself](#).) By working through the clutter of your life, you can eliminate those energy drains that can make you feel like you're '[being pecked to death by ducks](#)' and reserve that energy for dealing with life's more important challenges. Read more on being organized and [eliminating extra stress from your life](#).