

STRESS LESS

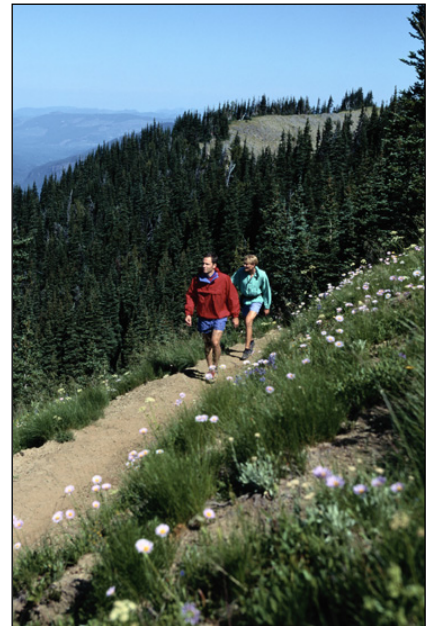
Excessive stress has been shown in the medical literature to increase the risk of, among others:

- Premature aging and aggravation of Parkinson's Disease
- Cardiovascular disease
- Gastric/Peptic/Duodenal ulcers
- Poor memory
- Certain types of cancer
- Hypertension

Exercise - Not Just for Your Body

Regular exercise is an absolute proven stress reduction technique. But sometimes we feel even too stressed to workout on a consistent basis. Simple modifications in posture, habits, thought, and behavior often go a long way toward reducing feelings of stress and tension. Here are six quick and simple things you can do immediately to help keep your stress level under control.

1. **Breathe** slowly and deeply. Before reacting to the next stressful occurrence, take three deep breaths and release them slowly. If you have a few minutes, try out breathing exercises such as meditation or guided imagery.
2. **Slow Down.** Whenever you feel overwhelmed by stress, practice speaking more slowly than usual. You'll find that you think more clearly and react more reasonably to stressful situations. Stressed people tend to speak fast and breathlessly; by slowing down your speech you'll also appear less anxious and more in control of any situation.
3. Get Some **Fresh Air.** Get outdoors for a brief break. Our grandparents were right about the healing power of fresh air. Don't be deterred by foul weather or a full schedule. Even five minutes on a balcony or terrace can be rejuvenating. Outdoor exercise is also usually the best option.
4. **Complete One** Simple "To Do". Jumpstart an effective time management strategy. Choose one simple thing you have been putting off (e.g. returning a phone call, making a doctor's appointment) and do it immediately. Just taking care of one nagging responsibility can be energizing and can improve your attitude.
5. Do a Quick **Posture Check.** Hold your head and shoulders upright and avoid stooping or slumping. Bad posture can lead to muscle tension, pain, and increased stress.
6. **Recharge** at the Day's End. Plan something rewarding for the end of your stressful day, even if only a relaxing bath or half an hour with a good book. Put aside work, housekeeping or family concerns for a brief period before bedtime and allow yourself to fully relax. Don't spend this time planning tomorrow's schedule or doing chores you didn't get around to during the day. Remember that you need time to recharge and energize yourself - you'll be much better prepared to face another stressful day.



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A Simple and Effective Exercise

Progressive relaxation is an effective therapy for inducing the relaxation response. People are first taught to contract and relax their face and neck muscles. These muscles are tensed for one to two seconds and then relaxed. This simple procedure helps patients experience the difference in blood flow to a muscle when it is stressed - and away from the muscle when it is relaxed. The "contracting" procedure is repeated progressively, from the face and neck to the upper chest and arms, the abdomen, hips, buttocks, thighs, knees, calves, and feet. The whole process is repeated two or three times, and produces a deep state of relaxation.

Further Resources

Remember to deal with the *cause*, not just the consequences. While there are many different kinds of stress and many tools or techniques available to help resolve it, outside assistance is usually required to bring about the needed change. Reading the right book may be all that it takes.

Following is a list of books that are either best-sellers or highly recommended:

The Relaxation and Stress Reduction Workbook by Martha Davis - a practical stress-management workbook filled with insightful self-assessment tests and stress reduction techniques.

The Book of Stress Survival by Alix Kirsta - although older, this is one of the best books on stress management. It is clearly laid out, practical, comprehensive and a pleasure to read.

Time Management from the Inside Out by Julie Morgenstern - she emphasizes that the most important thing readers should do is create a time management system that fits one's personal style, be it either spontaneous and easily distracted from, or highly regimented and efficient. "Just as everyone's living room looks different, reflecting the individual's or family's values and priorities, everyone's time management system will look different, reflecting what's important to him or her", she explains.

The Book of Stress Survival - How to Relax and Live Positively by Alix Kirsta - a well-presented, sensible approach to stress management. It covers many important areas that are completely ignored by most other books.

Getting Things Done by David Allen - a guide to staying on top of it all in a world where communication and responsibilities are increasing exponentially. Part I describes the game, Part II coaches you through implementing the system, and Part III explores the subtler and more profound benefits that you will experience when you incorporate these core principles and proven tricks into your work and your life.

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff - and it's all small stuff by Richard Carlson - offers 100 meditations

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designed to make you appreciate being alive, keep your emotions (especially anger and dissatisfaction) in proper perspective, and cherish other people.



Other ways to reduce stress include techniques that can induce the relaxation response, including yoga, meditation, progressive relaxation (detailed above), autogenic training, self-hypnosis, and biofeedback. Equally beneficial for stress management is aromatherapy, exercise, dancing, massage, and listening to soothing music. The key to stress reduction is to decide on a technique that you feel comfortable with and that you can easily incorporate into your daily routine.

Also, ask Dr. Pedersen about NET (Neuro Emotional Technique see www.netmindbody.com). Emotions are part of the natural, healthy response process we have to virtually every situation we encounter. However, sometimes challenging emotional experiences and physical vulnerabilities create lingering stress in our mind-body architecture. Dr. Pedersen has received Basic and Advanced training in NET and might be able to use it to help you overcome stressful situation affecting your mind and body. Ask for further information on your next visit.

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