



Stress Management

10 Simple Things
to YOU can do to
reduce your stress



Breathe

Breathing helps to slow down or to even stop the stress response! Takes time to practice, learn well and use daily. Often, people do not learn how to breathe correctly, and do not use it consistently. Try this technique:

- To breathe deeply, begin by putting your hand on your abdomen just below the navel .
- Inhale slowly through your nose and watch your hand move out as your belly expands.
- Hold the breath for a few seconds, then exhale slowly. Repeat several times.
- Whenever you find yourself in a stressful situation take a moment and breath deeply for at least a minute



Visualize Calm

- Close your eyes, take three long, slow breaths, and spend a few seconds picturing a relaxing scene, such as walking in a meadow, kneeling by a brook, or lying on the beach. Focus on the details — the sights, the sounds, the smells.
- If you are having trouble visualizing use this 10 minute guided imagery meditation on our [Self-Esteem-Experts](http://www.self-esteem-experts.com) site.

<http://www.self-esteem-experts.com/free-online-guided-meditation.html>)



Smile

- Smiling is a two-way mechanism. We do it when we're relaxed and happy, but doing it can also make us feel relaxed and happy.

Smiling transmits nerve impulses from the facial muscles to the limbic system, a key emotional center in the brain, tilting the neurochemical balance toward calm



Affirmations

Devise an affirmation — a short, clear, positive statement that focuses on your coping abilities. Affirmations are a good way to silence the self-critical voice we all carry with us that only adds to our stress.

The next time you feel as if your life is one disaster after another, repeat 10 times one of these affirmations:

- “I can handle this”
- “This too shall pass”
- “I choose peace and calm”



Take Responsibility

When stress happens you often hear people complain, ‘What did I do to deserve this?’. The trouble is, feeling like a victim only increases feelings of stress and helplessness and lowers your self esteem.

Focus on what you want to have happen not what is happening. Ask yourself this question. “**What do I want to have happen in this situation?**” Then, think of an action that you can do to move your stressor in the direction that you want.

Be Proactive – What can you do to make a difference for yourself and others?



Write your thoughts down

When stress happens all too often our minds are filled with anxiety which causes unclear thinking. The best thing you can do is sit down, take some deep breathes and start writing down your thoughts. Make three columns on a piece of paper.

Stressors

What I fear about it

What I can do about it

After you compile your list, pick the stressors that you can do something about and take an action. With the ones you can't not do anything about –turn them over to a higher power. ask god, spirit, universal force to handle the situation for you while you move on ones you can handle.



Just say NO

Set limits and stop trying to please everyone. This causes serious stress and leads to an unhealthy relationship with yourself. Learning to say “no” to more requests can be one of the biggest favors you can do yourself and those you love.

- Just say, “**I’m sorry. I can't do this right now.**” Use a sympathetic, but firm tone. If pressured as to why, reply that it doesn’t fit with your schedule, and change the subject.
- If you are uncomfortable with the first approach then it’s OK to say, “**Let me think about it and get back to you.**” This gives you a chance to review your schedule, as well as your feelings about saying “yes”
- If you really want to help the person you can say “**I can’t do this, but I can...**” and mention a lesser commitment that you can make.



Just Move

Use exercise to reduce your stress level.

- **Take a walk or go to the gym** - this helps you breathe more deeply and improves circulation.
- **Play with your pet** - turn off your mind by physically focusing on something else- something that brings you pleasure
- **Tending your garden** helps get you out of your head and lets you commune with nature, a known stress reliever



Say a little prayer

Focus on what you can do to reduce your stressors and not what you can't do.

Turn things that are out of your control over to a higher power. Studies show that turning things over to a higher power reduces stress and make you happier.

Keep a God Can- (a little container that you can put pieces of paper in). Write down what you want to turn over and then step out of the way and let God handle it.



Stretch

When people are under stress, they slump over as if they have the weight of the world on their shoulders. Slumping restricts breathing and reduces blood and oxygen flow to the brain, adding to muscle tension and magnifying feelings of panic and helplessness.

Stretch your spine –hold your hands up and reach for the sky. This will loosens muscles and encourages deep breathing.

Do a child's pose -On a rug or mat, kneel, sit back on your heels, then lean forward and put your forehead on the floor and your arms alongside your legs, palms up. Hold for one to two minutes.