



Mental health and stress resilience

6 simple tips to reduce stress

Need to relax? Here are six proven ways to reduce stress:

1. Practice deep breathing. Slowly breathe in, filling your lungs. Hold your breath for a moment, then slowly exhale.
2. Do gentle stretching. Slowly stretch your neck, shoulders and back. Stretch your feet, ankles and other joints as well.
3. Be active. Exercise can relieve built-up tension. You can't dwell on your problems while playing a fast game of tennis.
4. Talk over a problem with a friend, family member or counselor. Sharing an issue often brings relief and the courage to press on.
5. Learn to forgive. Sad, angry emotions are hard on your health. Learning to forgive is a great way to find peace. Plus, it's proven to lower blood pressure and relieve pain.
6. Relax. Balance work with play. Remind yourself that it's okay to have hobbies and enjoy life. Plan for an hour or two of fun each day.

Source: Wellsource/Momentum Health Shelf

A 7-day plan to improve your mood

SUNDAY: Relax. Meditate or take a long walk. Give yourself time to prepare for the week ahead.

MONDAY: Make a plan. Decide what tasks you need to complete and what can wait. Plan some events you'll look forward to.

TUESDAY: Surround yourself with friends and family. Spend time with the people who support you. Meet with someone you have lost touch with.

WEDNESDAY: Take care of your body. Limit smoking and alcohol. Drink plenty of water and eat healthy foods. Get enough rest.

THURSDAY: Give of yourself. Volunteer your time and energy to someone else.

FRIDAY: Do something different. Explore new interests by taking a class or visiting a museum. Start a journal.

SATURDAY: Value yourself. Treat yourself with kindness and respect. Make a list of your successes, talents and skills. Read it the next time you need a lift.

Source: Wellsource/Momentum Health Shelf

Trivia time:

Can stress turn your hair gray?

Answer: No, but stress may contribute to hair loss.

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What you can do to manage stress

A lot of events in life create stress. Getting married or having a child can be stressful. Finding a job or moving to a new home can cause stress, too. Some stress can have a positive effect on your life. It can help you rise to a challenge or push you to finish a tough project at school or work.

Stress becomes harmful when it is too much to manage. It can raise your risk for a number of health problems and wear down your immune system, causing you to be sick more often.

Sometimes you need to take action to break the stress cycle. Take time to get away from the issue long enough to figure out what to do. Calm yourself by breathing and relaxing, and try talking with someone else. Often, it takes a trained counselor to help you understand how to solve problems and deal with stress.

Source: Wellsource/Momentum Health Shelf

Trivia time:

Is laughter really the best medicine?

Answer: It might sound too good to be true, but studies show that laughter reduces pain, increases job performance, connects people emotionally and improves the flow of oxygen to the heart and brain.

Self check: Take this quiz to see if you're anxious

- > Do you feel you worry too much?
- > Do you get short of breath, or feel your heart racing?
- > Do you fear you're going crazy or losing control?
- > Are you afraid in social groups of any size?
- > Do you feel as if something bad will happen?
- > Do you have thoughts or images in your head that won't go away?

If you said "Yes" to one or more questions, talk to your doctor or a counselor about anxiety.

Source: Wellsource/Momentum Health Shelf

Exercise can help you feel happy

Exercise stimulates your body and makes feel-good chemicals in your brain. Getting active doesn't have to be a chore. Just 20 to 30 minutes a day is all it takes to feel happier. If you're bored with your normal workout, give these activities a try:

- > Start your day with yoga.
- > Take a dance class.
- > Ride your bike to the store.
- > Walk on your lunch break.
- > Play tennis or a game of hoops with a friend.

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