

Stress and Relaxation: The Yin and Yang of Life

by Shelby DePas ARNP

NUTRITION

Fresh fruits and vegetables neutralize oxidative stress that is a normal part of life. Cut back or cut out caffeine, alcohol, highly processed foods, and empty calories. Keep it simple and as close to how mother nature makes it.

MOVEMENT/EXERCISE

A powerful tool to release happy hormones (endorphins) and get the blood pumping. "Move it or lose it" is real. "Get Fit, Don't Sit"

SLEEP

A time for deep healing and rejuvenation for mind and body. Sleep disorders including sleep apnea are linked to a LARGE list of health problems including anxiety, depression, diabetes, heart disease etc.

BODY AWARENESS- learning to tune in or tune out

Breathing- AWARENESS is the key. Many many many options.

Place hands on abdomen and it expands on inhale and returns on exhale. Slowly "In with life out with love"

Two Minute Relaxation Technique -2 minute 2 times a day

- While sitting, cross your ankles
- Place your hands over center of chest, abdomen or both.
- Place your tongue behind your upper front teeth
- Breathe in through your nose, and out through nose or mouth
- Exhale fully, your exhale should be longer than the inhale
- Breathe in this way for about 1-2 minutes... promotes relaxation and sense of calmness

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Mental tension creates physical tension.

Learn to relax the physical helps relax the mental.

Always keep breathing slowly and deeply.

Work from the toes up, or head down.

Notice the tension in the body with a full body scan/check in.

5-10 second contract (active or just awareness of the tension if pain/injury issues)

Then RAPID RELAXATION/LIMP.

THOUGHT AWARENESS- taming the jumping monkey

Affirmations

Affirmation is a “*strong, positive statement acknowledging that something is already so*” (Pocket Guide for Holistic Nursing, 2005).

Affirmations can help change our beliefs and perceptions at a subconscious level, which can change our conscious reality.

Try saying them out loud and with gusto.

- What do you want to be different?
- Remember what you put your attention on is what grows.
- Use present tense verbs (I am, I feel, I know, I have, etc.)
- Avoid negative words (no/not, don't, can't, won't, etc.)

Examples: **Stressed**

Affirmation: I am calm and centered when my mother in law comes to visit.

Fear of Failure/Lack of confidence

Affirmation: I am the powerful woman/man who shares my gifts and talents fully and am detached from the outcomes.

I am beautiful/handsome.

Depressed

Affirmations: I am so happy and grateful for....

I am loved and loving.

I am happy for this day to create something new.

Pain/physical challenge

Affirmations: My body(a specific part) is strong and healthy.

I know that every day in every way I am healthier and happier.

Gratitude

Every moment is a choice in how we interact and think about our experiences in this world.

Every circumstance offers an opportunity for growth, healing, new/renewed connection, deep awareness.

Make effort to put gratitude/thanks into every moment and circumstance.

Thank you is more than good manners. It is a powerful practice.

Thank every part of your body for the amazing work that it does.

Start a gratitude journal that you write in every night before bed.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

Professional counseling support can be a very important component in helping address stress/anxiety/depression etc.

OTHER STRESS REDUCTION TECHNIQUES

Guided Imagery/Visualization

Uses the power of our imagination and images to help shift physical and emotional challenges.

Laughter

DAILY practice needed. Watch comedies, get a joke book etc.

TURN OFF the news and negative, violent, stress/tension provoking TV/internet.

Massage

Touch is a fundamental part of health and wellbeing.

Slather on that lotion after a shower/bath and thank each part as you moisturize.

Treat yourself to professional massage.

Meditation- Many different types to pick from.

The core is detached focused attention.

Mantra meditation- SO-HUM, a phrase without meaning.

Personal mantras

The microsecond “gap” between the thoughts is where deep healing and awareness.

Mindfulness-Present Moment Awareness

Much stress comes from thinking about the past or worrying about the future.

Spending more time enjoying the moment. It truly is the only thing we have.

Slow down and savor nature, food, friends, family, beauty, art etc.

Music

Auditory sense is very powerful relaxant or stimulant depending on your unique response.

Sounds of nature often connect to our deepest level.

Nature

Multiple benefits with sights, sounds, smells.

Step into the awe of creation. Tune down the brain and tune into the senses.

Pets

Physical contact as well as companionship are powerful to reduce stress.

Prayer

Communicating with and listening to divine wisdom/inspiration/knowing.

Resources:

The Relaxation & Stress Reduction Workbook: 6th Edition

Book by ELIZABETH ROBBINS ESHELMAN, Martha Davis, and Matthew McKay (2008)

The I of the Storm: Embracing Conflict, Creating Peace by Gary Simmons (2001)

Discover the Power Within You: A Guide to the Unexplored Depths Within by Eric Butterworth (2008)

The Optimist Creed by Christian D. Larson (1912)

Guided Imagery: www.healthjourneys.com
Belleruth Naparstek, ACSW, BCD

21 Day Meditations: <https://chopracentermeditation.com/library>
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