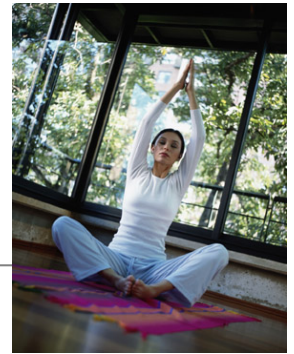


Quick Tips to Reduce Stress Anywhere



It can be very difficult to control your stress when faced with a situation that would normally get you agitated. Try these quick tips to take a step back and control your reaction to the situations around you.

Speak slowly. Stressed people tend to speak quickly and breathlessly. By slowing down your speech, you'll appear less anxious and more in control of any situation.

Breathe slowly. Take a deep breath in through your nose and hold your breath. Blow it out very slowly through pursed lips. Do this four times, keeping your hand on your lower abdomen.

Breathe fast. Take a deep breath in through your nose and blow it out quickly in four short staccato (short and quick) breaths through pursed lips.

Alternate nostril breaths. Close one of your nostrils with your thumb. Breathe in through your other nostril and out through pursed lips. Continue to alternate nostrils.

Distract yourself. Get away from the situation that is causing you stress for a few minutes. When you return to the stressful situation, you will feel more refreshed and able to focus.

Stretch. We hold most of our stress in our neck and shoulder area. Shrug your shoulders (only if you have no neck or shoulder problems). Reach your shoulders up around your ears, hold for a few seconds, and bring them back down. Roll your shoulders forward a few times, and then roll them back. For your neck, do a modified head roll. Tilt your right ear toward your right shoulder, bring head back up to center, bring left ear toward your left shoulder, back to center. Repeat this a few times.

Take a virtual vacation. Daydream that you are in a favorite place. Use all of your senses (smell, taste, sight, touch, sound). Surround yourself with pictures of your favorite places, people and pets.

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Yawn and sigh. This is a fast way to de-stress anywhere.

Count to ten. Before you do anything rash (like strike out verbally or physically at someone), count backwards from ten. While you are counting, think about alternative ways to handle the situation. Recognize that your beliefs are opinions – not facts – and that others are entitled to their beliefs, too. Count “10” and then take a deep breath and exhale it. Count “9” and then inhale/exhale. By the time that you get to 1, you should have a whole new perspective.

Get rid of the energy “drains” in your life. Look at the people and things in your life that have a negative impact on you. Decide to decrease your time with them and surround yourself with positive people and things instead.

Exercise, exercise, exercise. Just move! Take the stairs, do some knee bends as you brush your teeth, walk the dog, or dance around the house. It does not have to be organized exercise.

Leave 10 minutes earlier than you need to in order to get to work, school or appointments so that you won’t be stressed if there is a traffic jam or construction.

Use aromatherapy for a quick lift. Keep candles, soap, etc. around and take a quick whiff when you need to de-stress.

Remember that attitude is everything. “You can’t adjust the wind, but you can adjust your sails.” You can’t always change your circumstances, but you can control how you react to things.

Do a 30-second deep belly laugh every day. It is like internal jogging. The muscles contract when we laugh and they relax when we stop. It also relaxes the lining of the arteries which improves circulation.