

How to Relax

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Knowing how to relax is vital for ensuring your ongoing health and well-being, as well as restoring the passion and joy in your life. Your health is your responsibility. Allowing life's stressors to impact your health negatively will end up with you feeling under par in everyday activities and could eventually lead to illness. Here's how to get your anxiety under control.

Steps

Recognize and accept stress. Obviously, some stress is good for us – it adds interest and excitement to your life, and motivates us, in the right balance.^[1] It is when the level of stress in your life causes you to put up with things that are harming or distressing you constantly that you risk sliding into being too stressed. You might be too stressed if:

All you do and think about is [work](#), non-stop, be it your own business, a career, a salaried position, a stay-at-home mom or -dad position, or anything else that is soaking up your time and life one hundred percent, and this over-concentration is leaving you passionless, disappointed, unhappy, and unfulfilled.

You experience constant body tension, including headaches, neck aches, back aches, and general soreness.^[2]

You're often irritable, short-tempered, and perhaps unable to focus on completing tasks. Trivial things set you off easily.

You feel as if you have too much going on and that you can't "get off" the merry-go-round.

Your sleep is a battlefield and you wake up feeling less rested rather than refreshed. Insomnia has become your norm rather than an unusual event.

You're eating too much or too little. Or, you are choosing unhealthy food options.

You can't remember the last time you had a good laugh and your [sense of humor](#) is sadly lacking.^[3]

Prepare to relax. Once you have accepted that there are negative stressors impacting your life, it's important to make room for relaxation amid all those busy things you're doing. Adding relaxation to your day will improve your [productivity](#), not lessen it; while not adding relaxation into your life can lead to burn out, fatigue, stress-related illnesses, and constant insomnia. Ways to prepare for adding relaxation back into your routine



include:

Let go of guilt. Many religious and cultural beliefs instill the value of hard work very deeply. Over time, and increasingly so with the advent of smart technology that keeps us hyper-wired 24/7, many of us have come to believe that being "on-the-go" constantly is the only way to prove our value. Having an unrealistic interpretation of "hard work" will end up wearing you down – hard work is giving your tasks the attention they deserve at the time they deserve, not letting it bleed into all hours of your day!

Accept that [sleep](#) is a very important part of life. During sleep, your mind continues learning in ways that are not possible during waking hours. Sleep restores and refreshes your body in myriad ways that cannot happen when you're awake. Do not be tempted to devalue the worth of sleep. Moreover, the alleged ability of some people to thrive on four hours sleep per night is the exception, not the rule – most of us need the 6-8 hour sleep cycle for full restoration.

Recognize that finding your own optimal ways to relax may take time, as well as some trial and error. Don't give up – keep searching until you find the right combination of activities that relax you and rejuvenate your enthusiasm for living fully.

Make the time. Carve out space for relaxation in [your diary](#) or daily schedule. The following sections of this article will help to guide you through many ways of relaxing your body and your mind. However, you still need to make the time available to take advantage of the benefits of relaxing!

Block out times in your diary to relax. Think of it as an appointment with your most important client-you-that you absolutely cannot skip or break.

If you're at home, mark time for relaxing in black ink on a calendar for everyone to see. That way, the whole family will appreciate the importance of making time to relax.

Relaxing Your Body

Practice breathing techniques. Slow down your breathing and actively concentrate on it. This is always the easiest way to self-calm, provided you remember to resort to it.



Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Inhale deeply, count to five, hold your breath for five seconds, then exhale slowly, counting to five. Do this ten times to relax your muscles and nerves. As you breathe out, visualize the stress and tension leaving your body through your breath.

Make healthy dietary choices.

Avoid the excessive [refined sugar](#) found in granola bars, pastries or soda. Carbohydrates, such as pasta, convert easily to sugar. These can cause severe ups and downs in your blood sugar and lead to and agitation, upsetting your body's ability to efficiently utilize energy.

Avoid excessive caffeine. Too much caffeine can make you jumpy and irritable. Try not to drink caffeine after 1 or 2 in the afternoon, and keep your morning intake moderate and steady across every day. If you must have more coffee than you should, switch to decaf or an herbal tea with little or no caffeine.

Eat fresh fruits, vegetables and whole grains that are free of refined sugar, such as apples, grapes, carrots, broccoli, brown rice or whole grain breads.

Eat plenty of low-calorie protein, such as chicken, fish, whole grains, legumes, dark leafy vegetables or low-fat dairy. These proteins are a better source of energy.

Take a [multi-vitamin](#). Some vitamins [relieve stress](#). Vitamin B and Vitamin D are especially good for relaxation.

Exercise every day. This is the best-known, scientifically-proven way to significantly reduce stress. You'll be amazed at how much easier it is to overcome stress if you exercise regularly. Here are some ideas to try:

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- Aim for at least thirty minutes per day of moderate activity.
 - [Walk](#) in the park, in the woods, or on a treadmill.
 - Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
 - Park a little further away from the entrance of a store.
 - Ride a [bike](#).
 - Go [swimming](#). Try your local pool, a nearby lake or a friend or relative's home.
 - Increase your activity level, once you've improved your endurance.
 - Stretch. Lower your shoulders to help relax. Be more consciously aware of the tension that is quick to accumulate in your shoulders and neck region.

Meditate. Try traditional, respected and well-known meditation techniques. One of them may be the idea fit for you:



- **Do yoga.** Yoga relaxes your body and clears your mind of the stress and rush of the day.
- Try tai chi, ki, or aikido.
- Ask your local gym or spa for a relaxing workout suggestion. Some places will even build a program suited to your body type and energy levels.

Try a massage. Go to your local spa for a great massage. Undoing the body knots is a good pathway to undoing the mind knots.

Relaxing Your Mind

Practice positive thinking. Positive thinking isn't about wishful or dreamer thinking; it's about making the most of the situations that you find yourself in and avoiding any tendency to add negative overlays.

Use **visualization** techniques. While you might not feel calm and relaxed, imagining a calm and relaxed scene in your mind can do wonders to improve your outlook. Picture beaches, lying down resting, going for a hike, etc., to help you stay relaxed.

Use **affirmations** to change your outlook on life and stop yourself from always jumping to negative conclusions. **Affirmations** are short, powerful statements that build you up and increase your confidence, helping you to expect positive outcomes.^[4] Be careful about the words you choose – the things you say about yourself over and over again will ensure that you believe your own rhetoric. Use positive, believable, and caring words about yourself.

Teach yourself to step back and see the "big picture" when you're in the thick of things that don't seem to be going well. Recognize that most problems are temporary, and minor setbacks on the path to achieving larger goals.

Think logically, and restrain your emotions. If you learn to think more sequentially and logically when you're stressed, you might find that solutions become more apparent.

Turn an objective eye on your stressors. Take a realistic look at what's freaking you out, and consider how you'd advise a friend in a similar position. Then, follow your own advice.

Change your ways. If the problem is something you're doing, then change the way you act or react. Stop and listen to those around you to figure out and correct what it is you might be misunderstanding or doing wrong.

Find a quiet place when you are feeling overwhelmed and pamper yourself.



Draw a warm **bath**. Light candles around the tub, dim the lights, add bubbles or lavender, if desired.

Lie on your **bed** or sofa. Play some soft music or nature CDs. Relax listening to ocean waves, waterfalls or birds.

Read a good book. Curl up on the couch with a blanket and a cup of chamomile tea.

Imagine a personal paradise. Close your eyes and envision a different setting. What do you see around you? Is there a breeze? What do you hear - birds or water? Imagine the calming sound of ocean waves reaching the shore. Enjoy a moment in your special place.

Even the stall of a bathroom at work is an ideal "quiet spot" for a **breather** if you have no other place to go.

Stop feeling guilty. **Guilt** is a potent source of stress. Get rid of the source of guilt by behaving yourself; stop engaging in behaviors that make you feel guilty. Seek professional help, if necessary, but don't allow destructive behavior to escalate and sabotage your life and health.

Learn to prioritize. Make a list of tasks for the day. Organize the list by importance, and be **proactive** and take care of things before they become a big problem. Time spent more productively means more free time to relax.

Work! Although this may sound counteractive to your goal of relaxing, **procrastination** never feels as good as having nothing to do. Get your tasks done now, and then you can truly relax.

Practice meditation. Remove all thoughts and emotions from your mind by concentrating on your breathing. Meditation takes you into focusing on your whole being as a form of relaxation, rather than just focusing on one area of your body as any other relaxation technique tends to do. It can take a while to master, but it is well worth the effort.

- Begin with a sitting posture for a minimum of 15 minutes per session, and build up to 45–60 minutes per session.^[5]
- Try to meditate regularly.
- Find a respected mentor if you are having difficulty learning meditation by yourself.
- Avoid being intense, competitive, or frustrated about meditating – all of these emotions defeat its purpose!

Consider self-hypnosis. Focus on something, take a few deep breaths and let yourself become hypnotized. If you have trouble with self-hypnosis, go to a licensed hypnotherapist. Do not allow an amateur to try to hypnotize you, and beware of subliminal messages.

Do activities or hobbies that relax you. Get your mind off the things that normally stress you out. You may just need a break every now and then.



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- Go **fishing**, sew, sing, paint or take **photographs**.
 - Try singing a song using numbers instead of words. Singing can help to distract you from stress to suddenly relax.

- Use music as relaxation therapy. Play it as loudly or as softly as you like, whichever calms you the most.

Spend time with your pet. Cuddle or play with your pets. They'll love it and so will you. Talk to your pet about all the stress and anxiety you've been going through and you'll feel a lot better. Pet therapy is a genuine means for relaxing; you can also learn a lot from watching how your pet relaxes (note, animals don't carry guilt around!).

Smile and laugh. [Laughter](#) is the best medicine. Rent, buy or see a hilarious movie. This is guaranteed to help. Smiling and laughing releases endorphins, which fights stress, helps to relax and reminds you that life is more than just work. Even if it feels strange at first, make it a point to [smile](#) more often.

Staying Relaxed Around Stressful People

Sometimes the negativity and unrealistic expectations of other people can derail your determination to include relaxation as a valuable part of your life. Don't let that happen. Instead, consider the following suggestions to help you to remain relaxed around non-relaxed people.

Develop an invisible shield between yourself and stressed folk. This is really a visualization technique, in which you imagine that you are cocooned against the negative vibes of overly stressed people around you. See their behavior and attitudes for what they are, recognize what their stress is doing to them but refuse to let this penetrate your shield.

Don't carry the world's weight on your shoulders – these people are making a choice to behave in this way, and you don't have to come along for the ride.

De-linking yourself from others stress can be hard at first, especially if you are empathic by nature, but keep practicing until not giving in to their negativity becomes second nature.

Disconnect. Put the phone back down, shut the email folder, walk away. Whenever you feel like making an instantaneous reply in [anger](#) to someone who has raised your ire, don't act on it. When we feel angry and stressed, we are more likely to read sinister interpretations into our interactions and if we act on them, our self-righteous anger can be self-fulfilling when the person responds negatively. Sleep on your angry missive and practice the relaxation techniques outlined here.



Write a draft of your response, and let it sit for a day. If everything in it is just as true and valid to you 24 hours later, consider sending it. If not, you'll be grateful you held off.

Walk away and decompress. Instead of acting in anger, remove yourself from the situation until your calm has returned.

Avoid toxic personalities. Spend less time with people who try to guilt you into doing things or tell you that you're not good enough. Yes, even if they're family.

Steer clear of people who are **constantly complaining** or miserable, aka "negaholics". Stress can be contagious, so avoid transmitters. Understand that there is always a solution to a problem, even if they don't, or won't, see that.

Avoid people who practice the art of woundology (and avoid practicing it yourself!).^[6] Wallowing in misery is an artform for some people. You don't need their negativity, nor their rapacious need for making the worst of every situation.

Give hugs. Go on the positive offensive and reach through to people who seem down and negative. Caring touch reduces stress and promotes relaxation. Say hello and goodbye to your friends and family members with a hug, and don't be afraid to comfort someone with a hug, or ask for a hug when you're feeling overwhelmed.



Know when to let go of some relationships. If you value your relationships, as do most people, it can be challenging to realize that there are people who are just too toxic or too needy to keep in your inner circle because they sap your energy and stress you constantly. Sometimes it's best to let go, provided you do so after thinking it through carefully. Avoid being judgmental, hurtful, or blunt; just move on as you need to. The following articles might help you work out what could be wrong with a relationship that's getting you down, and what to do about it:

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- [Deal With Impossible People](#)
 - [Recognize a Manipulative or Controlling Relationship](#)
 - [Recognize a Toxic Friend](#)
 - [Recognize a Toxic Relationship.](#)

Spend time with people who radiate warmth and with whom you can truly connect. Contact with positive-thinking and joyous people broadens your capacities enormously and helps you to feel more relaxed and happy.



Sites with Relaxing Sounds

[Relaxing Nature](#) Listen to relaxing natural sounds such as sea, water and rain, birds and night. [Rainy Mood](#) Hear calming rain sounds. [Peace Sounds](#) Relaxing solo piano music for purchase, as well as a 15-minute free relaxation download.

Video

In this video, How to get your mind to relax

Tips

- As you begin to exclude sugar from your diet, you may continue to crave it and feel agitated. Be strong. After a couple of days, the cravings will subside and you'll begin to feel calmer. Also try adding cinnamon to some of your food. It acts as a de-craving solution to stop you wanting to eat sweets.
- **Be confident!** Don't give up. Continue with these relaxation techniques. You "can" reduce your stress levels. Just by visiting this site and looking for help, you're already well on your way.

- Make sure you don't get worked up from the actions of people who ought to know better but are taking out their own frustrations and lack of self-focus on you. Let their frustrations and thoughtless actions slide off you like water from a duck's back.
- Download e-books on relaxation. Use controlled breathing, muscle tensing and relaxing, affirmations (which become your own subliminal messages to your subconscious), and visualization to experience the full impact of total relaxation.
- Be calmed by water. Assemble a small [fountain](#) in your bedroom or yard. Walk near a beach or lake. The calming sounds of water can be very soothing.
- Read a book or an article that makes you think. Read about a leader you find inspiring, such as Martin Luther King, or look up Frankl's writings about the mind. [Inspirational](#) thoughts can lead to a more positive outlook on life and add new energy.
- De-clutter your home or living space. It is very hard to relax in a house where stuff is always in the way, ruling your life.
- You don't need to work out like a body builder or celebrity. Keep exercise in perspective so that you actually do it and enjoy it, rather than fear it and avoid it. A daily 20-minute walk is sufficient if that's all that interests you.

Warnings

- Consult your physician if stress is causing serious symptoms, such as headaches, poor appetite or general fatigue.
- Thousands of people become unknowingly [addicted](#) to drugs and alcohol in times of severe stress. Practice resilience in order to prevent this from happening to you. One of the hardest parts of dealing with stress is recognizing it and avoiding temptations that mask it rather than remedy it.

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