

Dr. McMinn's Stress Management Toolbox

Stress can leave us feeling helpless, as if life is out of our control. But the truth is, you have more power than you think. This toolbox gives you proven, practical tools to calm your body, focus your mind, and restore your resilience.

Pick the tools that work best for you, and build your own personalized stress management plan. For additional guidance, see Dr. McMinn's Stress Management Plan, included in this appendix and also available in the documents section at McMinnMD.com.

Quick-Action Summary

If you only have a few minutes today, try these tools:

- Pause and take three slow, deep breaths.
 - Step outside for fresh air and sunlight.
 - Write down one thing you're grateful for.
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Foundations

- **Prioritize sleep** — A good night's rest restores your resilience.
 - **Move daily** — Even 10–20 minutes of walking, stretching, or yoga counts. Choose non-competitive activities to avoid added stress.
 - **Eat well** — Limit sugar, caffeine, and junk food; focus on balanced meals for steady energy.
 - **Invite joy & love** — Actively bring laughter, play, and connection into your life.
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Mind-Body Practices

Active

- **Practice mindfulness** — Begin with 5 minutes of quiet focus daily.
- **Meditate** — Try guided apps like Headspace or Calm.
- **Move mindfully** — Practice yoga, tai chi, or qi gong.
- **Breathe deeply** — See appendix on belly breathing.
- **Relax progressively** — Follow guided muscle relaxation videos.
- **Pray** — Connect with your spiritual practice.

- **Express sexuality** — Healthy sexual expression (self or partnered) can release tension.

Passive

- **Receive bodywork** — Massage, acupuncture, or acupressure.
 - **Try healing touch** — Such as craniosacral therapy.
 - **Use heat or water therapy** — Sauna, hydrotherapy, or a hot bath with Epsom salts.
 - **Listen to soothing sounds** — Ocean waves, birdsong, or gentle music.
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Emotional & Cognitive Tools

- **Journal daily** — Especially gratitude and forgiveness journaling.
 - **Use affirmations and mantras** — Speak positive statements to yourself each morning and throughout the day.
 - **Seek counseling** — Explore therapy such as CBT or anger management.
 - **Practice guided imagery or hypnosis** — Visualize calming scenes.
 - **Laugh often** — Watch comedy or uplifting shows.
 - **Read positively** — Choose books that inspire.
 - **Limit negative input** — Reduce exposure to distressing news. Avoid internet doom-scrolling. Choose uplifting content instead.
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Lifestyle & Social Connection

- **Choose your company** — Spend time with positive people; limit draining relationships.
 - **Join support groups** — Share, connect, and heal with others.
 - **Foster intimacy** — Emotional and physical closeness lowers stress.
 - **Manage time well** — Prioritize what matters most and create structure.
 - **Set boundaries** — Avoid overcommitment; practice saying “no.”
 - **Strengthen financial health** — Reduce money stress with a plan; seek advice if needed.
 - **Nurture relationships** — Resolve disputes and practice forgiveness.
 - **Schedule rest** — Make regular time for relaxation.
 - **Take vacations** — Step away to recharge fully.
 - **Help others**- brings peace and joy to life.
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Nature & Environment

- **Get outside daily** — Enjoy sunlight, fresh air, and green spaces.
- **Garden** — Hands-on connection with the earth is grounding.
- **Enjoy water therapy** — Watch rivers, lakes, or oceans; listen to waves.

Creative & Playful Tools

- **Sing or dance** — Express yourself through music and movement.
- **Play** — Engage in games or fun activities.
- **Explore hobbies** — Try art, photography, music, or crafts.

Therapeutics & Advanced Approaches

- **Use herbs & natural remedies** — Such as St. John's Wort, chamomile, Siberian ginseng, rhodiola, ginkgo biloba, ashwagandha, or passionflower.
- **Try Bach flower therapy** — Example: Rescue Remedy.
- **Support with supplements** — B vitamins, magnesium, selenium, and more.
- **Balance hormones** — For some women, oral progesterone can be calming (always under a doctor's guidance).
- **Consider homeopathy** — Explore remedies tailored to your needs.
- **Try cranial electrical stimulation.**
- **Explore neurofeedback or biofeedback.**
- **Practice DNRS (Dynamic Neural Retraining System)** — Programs like Annie Hopper, Gupta Program, or Thriving Spoonies Pathway. Especially helpful for people with PTSD, or vagus nerve dysfunction.
- **Use medications** — There is a time and a place for appropriate medical therapy under professional supervision.
- **Adopt a pet** — A dog or cat can offer companionship and reduce stress.

Mindset Shifts

- **Practice gratitude** — Acknowledge blessings daily.
- **Show loving-kindness** — Extend compassion to yourself and others.
- **Live in the moment** — Release regret about the past and worry about the future.
- **Focus on core beliefs** — Align actions with your values.
- **Stop “awfulizing”** — Avoid making challenges bigger in your mind than they are.
- **Use self-help resources** — Read or listen to motivational material.
- **Remember** — Stress is real, but so is your ability to recover.

Personal Reflection

Choose your go-to tools and commit:

- **My Top 3 Daily Stress Tools:** _____
- **My Quick Rescue Tools:** _____
- **One New Practice I'll Try This Week:** _____

Medical Disclaimer:

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