



Mental Health 365, Inc.

# 10 Ways to DeStress

**Stressed out? Let's learn key stress reduction techniques and why they are good for happiness.**

Whether it's misplacing your keys before an early meeting at work, being worried about an upcoming doctor's appointment, or having to give a presentation in front of your classmates, stress is a universal experience. Oftentimes, our daily stress levels can fluctuate because of our individual circumstances with work, health, or our families and friends. Bigger situations such as a global pandemic, natural disasters, or political issues may also contribute to higher stress.

While we may not always be in control of our stressors, we are in charge of how we respond to them. Here are some ways to deal with stressful situations and learn how to reduce the impact stress has on your well-being.

## Ways To De-Stress

Oftentimes, we may be occupied with a never-ending to-do list, meetings that could have been emails, or stuck in afternoon traffic that makes our hectic lives just that much busier. Finding time for ourselves in the mix of all of our responsibilities can be challenging. Luckily, even with a handful of free minutes a day, we can do a few things that may help us calm down and lower our stress. Let's take a look at some examples.

- 1. Go for a short walk.** Walking allows us to clear our minds, get some fresh air, and get our bodies moving. When we go outside, our minds can become stimulated by the outdoor environment rather than the internal stress we may be focusing on. Additionally, physical activity releases endorphins, which are feel-good hormones in the brain that support pain relief (Rhodes et al., 2009).
- 2. Take a music break.** The reason why music can feel therapeutic is that listening to songs we enjoy, can sing along with, or dance to releases a neurotransmitter, or a chemical messenger, in our brains called dopamine (Labbé et al., 2007). Dopamine has several functions, but some of its functions include lowering blood pressure and feeling contentment, which may result in better moods.

- 3. Call a loved one.** It may be beneficial for you to pick up the phone to hear the sound of someone else's voice when the stress in your head begins to feel loud. According to health psychology, social support is an incredible tool for stress relief, coping with difficult situations, and even overcoming illnesses. Talking to a loved one can aid us in feeling less alone, especially when we are going through tough times (Coleman & Iso-Ahola, 1993).
- 4. Cuddle with your fur baby.** Touch and affection can positively impact our well-being because research has shown that they can reduce cortisol—the hormone in our bodies that induces stress reactions. Not only can a quick at-home pet therapy session make you de-stress, but it can also improve the bond with your pet too.
- 5. Give mindfulness meditation a try.** In recent years, mindfulness meditation has become an increasingly popular stress relief technique. Mindfulness meditation is the practice of centering ourselves by bringing awareness to the present moment (Astin, 1997).
- 6. Take a hot bath or shower.** Research suggests that a hot bath or shower about 90 minutes before bed can help lower stress. When we feel elevated levels of stress emotionally, our bodies can feel the physical effects of tension, muscle aches, and overall fatigue (Lehrer & Woolfolk, 2021).
- 7. Reduce caffeine intake.** It may be best to keep caffeine reserved for your morning coffee. Drinking caffeine too close to bedtime can alter our sleep patterns, keep us awake when we are tired, and elevate stress levels (Lovallo et al., 2006).
- 8. Read instead of scroll.** Between Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and Facebook, we have more than enough apps on our phones that make it easy to absorb content endlessly. If you catch yourself repeatedly saying “just one more video” and later realizing it has been hours past your bedtime, it may be time to limit your phone use before bed. The downside of scrolling on our phones late at night is that the blue light from screens can reduce the production of melatonin, a hormone found in our bodies that induces sleep. If you're craving some relaxation before bed, try picking up a book you might enjoy instead (Jin, 1992).
- 9. Write about it.** When we face stressors or challenges in our lives, it's easy to bundle up all our emotions about the situation inside of us. Sometimes, putting any intrusive or anxious thoughts out on paper can provide clarity about our issues or find new ways to solve problems—not to mention, release onto paper all the emotions we have about our stressors (Davis, Eshelman, & McKay, 2008).
- 10. Take care of your skin.** Who knew that spending more time in the bathroom could be better for your emotional health? Not only does having a skincare routine benefit, well...your skin, but it may also help reduce stress. Research about skincare as a technique for stress reduction is fairly new, but evidence suggests that feeling good about your skin externally can help your body feel better internally as well (Sharma & Black, 2001).

## In Sum

We all experience some level of stress. No matter the magnitude of our stressors, the situations that elevate stress can weigh heavy on our minds and bodies if we don't de-stress every day. Hopefully, this article provided you with a plethora of options to choose from as you compile your own list of favorite stress management techniques.

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