

Stress Relief Checklist

By Lauren Meir

Quick Fixes

- Close your eyes, take several deep breaths and count backwards** This is a good way to deal with a stressful situation where you only have a few minutes to spare.
- Turn off all digital gadgets** Step away from the computer! Shut off your phone! Even just having a few minutes of tech-free time can work wonders for your frazzled nerves. Just pretend you're on a plane and it's not allowed.
- Have a cup of herbal or green tea** Besides being chock-full of antioxidants, the soothing heat and aroma from fresh tea can ease frazzled nerves. But nix the caffeine...you don't want to put yourself more on edge!
- Squeeze a stress ball** These small squishy toys were popular a few years ago, but thanks to the increasingly stressful demands of 21st century life, they're making a comeback.
- Listen to some calming music or nature sounds** You may not be a fan of classical music or bird calls, but studies have shown that both have soothing effects on your mind, and may even increase creativity. So relax....and let the creative juices flow.
- Write it out** Jot down your thoughts in a journal or even a notepad. Just putting down your stresses in writing can help get them out of your system. You can even trash or burn the paper afterwards (just make sure you do it safely).
- Spend time with your pet** Even just a few minutes of cuddling or playing with a pet can help reduce stress. Animals, unlike most people, have ;therapeutic ;properties!

Extended Remedies

- Get some sleep** Sometimes a good night sleep is all it takes. Shut out all artificial light, turn off the TV and grab some well-deserved shut-eye.
- Meditate** You don't have to chant "Ohm" to feel relief. Just sit in a comfortable spot, close your eyes, breathe deeply, and clear your mind. No, really, clear your mind! Focus on your breathing. Do this for at least 10 minutes a day, and you'll notice a difference.
- Book a massage** Work out the tension from your muscles with a quality massage. Sure, they're not always cheap, but a good massage can leave you floating on a cloud of relaxed happiness for months.
- Take a bubble bath** Not just for kids anymore, a long soak in the tub with scented bubbles is a great way to treat yourself to some aromatherapy. Enhance the mood with candles, soft music and a glass of red wine.
- Indulge in a sweet (or savory) treat** Enjoy a comfort food you haven't had in awhile. Childhood treats, for example, are not only tasty but can conjur up positive memories of happiness and comfort. So have that hot-fudge brownie sundae...it's for medicinal purposes, after all.
- Take a walk** Even a short walk around the neighborhood, to your favorite park or nature spot, can work wonders. Being outside in the fresh air will rejuvenate ;your spirits.
- Exercise** Work it out! Cardio is great at blasting stress-inducing hormones. Go jogging or do plyometric, explosive exercises to get your heart pumping and your mind clear. Feeling especially angry? Try kickboxing for ultra stress relief.

- Do Yoga** More than just stretching and muscle conditioning, Yoga is a great activity that can reduce stress and improve flexibility. If you've never tried it before, sign up for a beginner's class at your local studio. It may be the perfect remedy!
- Spend time either alone or with loved ones** What stresses you out less? Maybe you need some quality time alone with a favorite book, or perhaps you feel better surrounded by close family or friends.
- Have a spa day** Spas are not just for women, either - there are a seemingly endless array of spa facilities catering to all sorts of crowds. Choose from a variety of stress-relieving options, from massages and facials to hot springs and acupuncture.
- Plan a vacation** If you have some time off coming, what better excuse than to go on a little trip? It could be a weekend getaway or a transatlantic cruise, but chances are you'll be getting both much-needed rest and a good dose of fun.