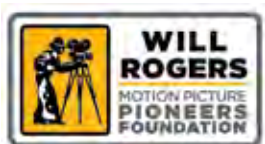


# Managing Stress



- *Understanding Stress*
- *Learning to Relax*
- *Stretching Exercises*
- *Lifestyle Stress Busters*
- *Improving Your Space*
- *Stress-less Tips*



# Understanding Stress

---

Stress is how your body and your mind react to change. It can get you going and help you focus. However, if you have too much or if you don't deal with it well, stress can lead to unwanted symptoms.

## Stress Triggers

Many things can trigger stress, including:

- ❧ Minor things like oversleeping, running late, car problems, or traffic
- ❧ Major events such as moving, getting married, having a baby, or changing or losing your job
- ❧ Ongoing problems with things like money, health, or work

## Symptoms

Stress symptoms may include:

- ❧ Clammy hands, dry mouth, headaches, tight muscles, a skin rash, or sleep problems
- ❧ Anger, confusion, sadness, fear, or forgetfulness
- ❧ Alcohol or drug abuse
- ❧ Avoiding loved ones, eating problems, or depression

## Home Care

- ❧ Learn to relax.
- ❧ Change your lifestyle.
- ❧ Stretch tight muscles.
- ❧ Improve your living and working space.



Call a doctor or a mental health professional if you:

- ❧ Rely on alcohol, drugs, or overeating.
- ❧ Feel depressed, out of control, or hopeless.
- ❧ Have missed a lot of work.
- ❧ Have gained or lost a lot of weight.
- ❧ Can't control your spending habits.

# Learning to Relax

---

When you are relaxed, your body slows down and your mind becomes calm. You feel better, think better, and work better. There are many ways to relax. Try one of the methods below or come up with your own.

## Deep Breathing

It's a good idea to practice deep breathing regularly. Deep breathing is a great way to relax your body and your mind. It's also an important part of many other relaxation methods.

1. Choose a quiet spot. Sit or stand in a comfortable position.
2. Slowly breathe in through your nose and push out your stomach as much as you can.
3. Hold your breath for a few seconds.
4. Slowly breathe out through your mouth. Pucker your lips (like you are whistling) so you can control how fast the air comes out of your mouth.
5. Repeat three or four times.



# The Calming Response

The Calming Response takes the Deep Breathing method a step further. Use this technique to calm yourself before or during a stressful event.

1. Breathe in deeply.  
Hold your breath for 5 seconds.
2. Blow out slowly and focus on relaxing all the muscles in your body.
3. Repeat the following words to yourself: "I am relaxed."
4. Continue for a few minutes until you feel calm.



## Imagery

This is a good method to use when you need a mini-break from the stresses of the day.

1. Close your eyes and picture a peaceful, restful, beautiful, happy scene.
2. Allow your imagination to run free. For example, imagine yourself on a beach. "See" the palm trees. "Hear" the breaking waves. "Smell" the ocean air. "Feel" the sun on your body.
3. If stressful thoughts enter your mind, gently push them aside by focusing on the details of your scene.
4. Think about the scene until you feel rested and relaxed.



## Autogenics

With this method, you actually “tell” your body to relax. If you would like more control over your body’s reaction to stress, this may be a good relaxation method for you.

1. Sit and close your eyes.
2. Relax your right hand and let it go loose. Say to yourself “My right hand feels warm and heavy.” In your mind, picture your hand getting warm and heavy.
3. Repeat these words and focus on your hand until it begins to feel warm and heavy.
4. Repeat this process with your right arm, left hand, left arm, right leg, left leg, and so on until all the muscles in your body feel relaxed.



## Other Methods to Try

### Positive Self-Talk

Boost your self-esteem. Tell yourself you can meet your goals and that you are in control.

### Rehearsal

Get ready for stressful events. Act out an event before it occurs and imagine it ending well.

### Progressive Muscular Relaxation

Learn how it feels to relax. One at a time, tense and relax the major muscle groups in your body. Think about how it feels to be relaxed instead of tense.

# Stretching Exercises

---

Stress can make your muscles tight and sore. When you stretch, you not only relax and soothe your muscles, you calm your mind as well.

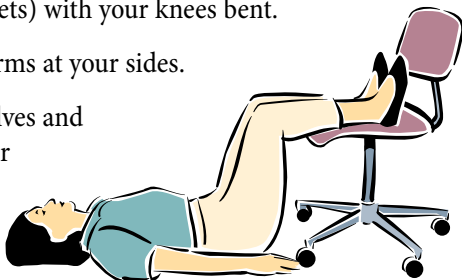
## Forward Lean

1. Lean forward in a chair.
2. Lower your head to your knees.
3. Hold for 30 seconds.



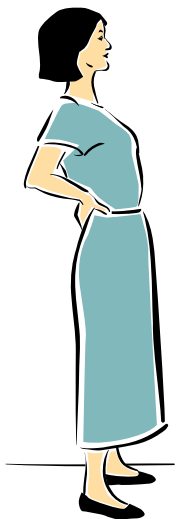
## Supported Rest

1. Lie on a carpeted floor (or on a couple of folded blankets) with your knees bent.
2. Place your arms at your sides.
3. Rest your calves and feet (not your thighs) on a couch or chair.
4. Hold for 5 to 15 minutes.



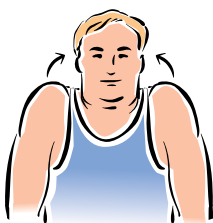
## Backward Bend

1. Stand in a comfortable position with your feet slightly apart.
2. Put your hands on your lower back and bend backward a few inches.
3. Hold for 5 seconds.



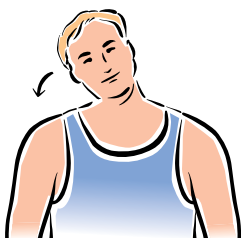
## Shoulder Shrug

1. Stand or sit with your arms at your sides.
2. Raise your shoulders up toward your ears.
3. Hold for 5 seconds and lower your shoulders.
4. Relax and repeat.



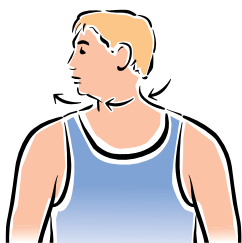
## Neck Tilt

1. Stand or sit and tilt your head to the right so your ear is over your shoulder.
2. Hold for 5 seconds and return to the center.
3. Repeat on the other side.



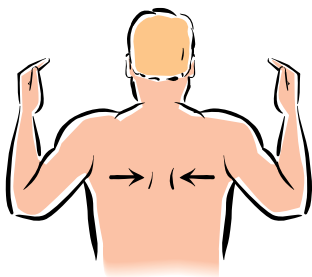
## Neck Turn

1. Stand or sit and turn your head to the right as far as you can.
2. Hold for 5 seconds and return to the center.
3. Relax and repeat on the other side.



## Shoulder Squeeze

1. Stand or sit and bring your hands level with your ears.
2. Squeeze your shoulder blades together.
3. Hold for 3 seconds.
4. Relax and repeat.



# *Lifestyle Stress Busters*

---

## Exercise

You probably already know that exercise makes you stronger and healthier. What you may not know is that exercise also helps reduce stress symptoms.

### Why Exercise?

- ❧ Release built-up stress.
- ❧ Reduce stress symptoms.
- ❧ Take your mind off your stress triggers.
- ❧ Produce natural painkillers (called endorphins).



### Getting the Most from Exercise

- ❧ Do exercise that makes your heart beat faster like running, walking, biking, or swimming.
- ❧ Work out at least three times a week for 20-60 minutes each time.
- ❧ Go into your workout thinking that you are going to feel great and release stress.

### Tips for Getting Started

- ❧ Find the kind of exercise you enjoy.
- ❧ Start slowly. Becoming more fit shouldn't be painful.
- ❧ Make time for your workouts like you would any other appointment.
- ❧ Try exercising with a group or a friend.
- ❧ Set fitness goals. Goals can push you to improve your level of fitness.
- ❧ To keep yourself interested, change where you exercise or the type of exercise you do.
- ❧ If you miss a session or two, don't quit.

# Get the Sleep You Need

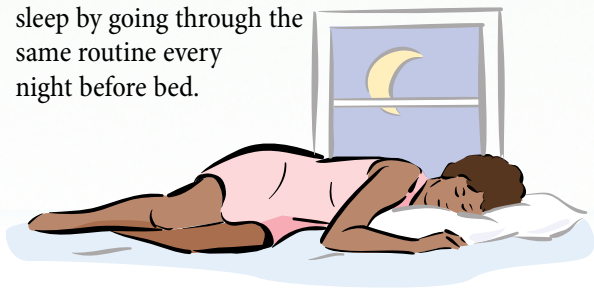
Sleep helps you recover from the stresses of the day. Unfortunately, when you are under stress and most in need of sleep, it can be hard to come by.

## Check Your Sleep Environment

- ❧ Sleep on a firm, comfortable mattress.
- ❧ If you have a partner, get a bed that is big enough for both of you.
- ❧ Turn off the ringer on your phone.
- ❧ Keep your room dark or wear a blindfold.
- ❧ Make sure the air in your bedroom is cool and fresh.

## Practice Good Sleep Habits

- ❧ Go to bed only if you are sleepy. If you are wide awake, do something relaxing until you feel drowsy.
- ❧ Avoid caffeine for at least six hours before going to bed.
- ❧ Don't drink alcohol for at least three hours before going to bed.
- ❧ Use your bed for sleep only (not for reading, watching TV, or lounging).
- ❧ Tell your body it's time for sleep by going through the same routine every night before bed.



- ❧ Before going to bed, try taking a lukewarm bath or drinking a warm glass of milk or a cup of herbal tea.
- ❧ Wake up at the same time every day.

# Choose the Right Foods

## Foods to Choose

If you are feeling stressed, the nutrients below can help you fight stress symptoms.

### Vitamin C

Green peppers  
Grapefruit  
Potatoes  
Oranges  
Melons

### Calcium

Collard greens  
Broccoli  
Spinach  
Cheese  
Yogurt  
Milk

### Protein

Dried beans  
Almonds  
Cheese  
Meat  
Milk

### Vitamin B

Whole grains  
Beans  
Seeds  
Liver  
Nuts

## Foods to Lose

Foods that contain the items listed below can make your stress symptoms worse.

### Caffeine

Soft drinks  
Chocolate  
Coffee  
Cocoa  
Tea

### Salt

Smoked or cured foods  
Processed snack food  
Canned vegetables  
Vegetable juices  
Sauerkraut  
Soy sauce  
Pickles

### Sugar

Jams and jellies  
Processed foods  
Soft drinks  
Ice cream  
Candy  
Cake

### Saturated fat

Fatty meats  
Whole milk  
Egg yolks  
Cheese  
Butter

# Improving Your Space

---

Living or working in unpleasant surroundings can increase stress symptoms. To make your space more relaxing, follow the guidelines below.

## Clear the Air

- ❧ Don't smoke or let others smoke around you.
- ❧ Leave the windows open.
- ❧ If the air is too humid, use a dehumidifier.
- ❧ If the air is too dry, set out potted plants.

## Use the Right Light

- ❧ Don't use too much or too little light.
- ❧ Don't let light shine right into your eyes.
- ❧ Spend as much time as you can near windows and other sources of natural light.
- ❧ If fluorescent lighting bothers your eyes, try full-spectrum or halogen bulbs.

## Clean It Up

- ❧ Try not to let dirt and clutter build up.
- ❧ But don't work too hard at making your space spotless.

## Cut Down on Noise

- ❧ If you work in an open office space, ask your employer to install partitions.
- ❧ If noise from housemates or neighbors bothers you, use a "white" noise machine or an electric fan to block out the noise.

## Make Your Own Space

- ❧ Try to create some personal space for yourself.
- ❧ If you don't have a room of your own, try blocking off an area with screens or plants.

# Stress-less Tips

---

- ❧ Think of waiting time as free time. Read a book, write letters, or just relax.
- ❧ Lower your standards. The world will not end if you don't finish each and every task.
- ❧ Write down your thoughts and feelings. Writing allows you to express yourself and may help you find a new way of looking at things.
- ❧ If you must get something done, don't put it off. Waiting until the last minute increases stress.
- ❧ Do one thing at a time. Don't try to eat, watch TV, and talk with your family all at once.
- ❧ Take time out for yourself every day. Take a long, hot bath, go for a walk, or enjoy your favorite hobby.
- ❧ Talk out your problems with a counselor or a trusted friend. Even if you don't come up with any solutions, talking may make you feel better.
- ❧ Plan ahead. Buy stamps or bus tokens before you run out. Fill the gas tank when you still have a quarter tank.
- ❧ Remember that some tasks need to be done perfectly, and others just need to be done.
- ❧ Be on time. When you are late, you add extra stress to an already hectic schedule.



---

The information in this guide has been accumulated from current medical literature and is generally accepted by the medical community at this time. However, this information is not meant as a substitute for personal medical advice. If you have worrisome symptoms or conditions, contact a physician immediately.

**KRAMES**  
**staywell**