

Stress Relief Tips

These are some things we all need to do for ourselves but sometimes forget when we especially need them. Find some that appeal to you and give them a try when you're feeling tense or nervous. When really stressed you can check-in with yourself with **HALT**. Ask yourself, "Am I **H**ungry, **A**ngry, **L**onely, or **T**ired?" and pick something from the lists below.

The Absolute Basics

Sleep. Work at home and other stresses can lengthen the day, but you need your sleep. The mind rejuvenates at rest. Getting enough sleep helps you feel refreshed and relaxed.

Eat healthy. Stress, burnout and secondary trauma deregulates stress hormone levels, but you can help restore order through consistent exercise and healthy eating habits. Eat every few hours to keep your blood sugar balanced. Drink plenty of water.

Exercise. Reduce stress hormone levels through exercise. Exercise—including hiking and dancing—will help you feel better while improving overall stamina and health. The right exercise even can be fun.

Do something fun or creative. Pick something you enjoy, such as:

Art	Crosswords	Games	Movies	Reading fiction	Photography
Cooking	Dancing	Gardening	Needlework	Writing creatively	Crafts

Make connections. Reach out to the people who matter most to you. Call a friend you can talk to.

Self-Care Tips

- Mark the transition from work to non-work with regular rituals, such as music, exercise, change of clothes or meditation.
- Incorporate a grounding tool at the beginning of the workday...an energizing tool right after lunch... and a relaxing tool at the end of the workday.
- Cultivate self-compassion with regard to your environmental stressors.
- Identify the three most nurturing people in your life and increase the amount of support you receive from them.
- Make relaxation part of your workday.
- Take an environmental audit of your workspace. Assess the comfort and appeal of: wall paint, scents, reading material, artwork, and furniture. Try to create a flourishing environment for yourself!
- Pursue personal development activities such as creative arts; mediation seminars and self-help groups.
- Engage in reading or a hobby, take vacations/pleasure trips; attend cultural/artistic events and movies.
- Evaluate the integration of spirituality and personal growth in your own life. Promote this synthesis.
- Build into your weekly schedule a concrete method to count your blessings such as an imagery exercise or gratitude journal.

Self-Care Plan

1. What are situations or experiences that you tend to find stressful or overwhelming?

2. What are signs that you are becoming stressed or overwhelmed (e.g., raised voice, upset face, impatience, exhaustion, loss of social life, strong reactions to minor issues)?

3. Please select from the activities below a few things you find helpful when feeling upset, stressed out, or overwhelmed. These are things that you can do for yourself and ways that other people can help you.

Activity	Activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Deep breathing	<input type="checkbox"/> Reading
<input type="checkbox"/> Drawing or painting	<input type="checkbox"/> Taking a nap
<input type="checkbox"/> Exercising	<input type="checkbox"/> Taking a shower
<input type="checkbox"/> Having someone give me suggestions	<input type="checkbox"/> Walking
<input type="checkbox"/> Having someone sit and listen	<input type="checkbox"/> Watching TV
<input type="checkbox"/> Having time and space to calm down	<input type="checkbox"/> Writing in a journal
<input type="checkbox"/> Listening to music	<input type="checkbox"/> Yoga or stretching
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:

4. Please select responses from others that are not helpful when you're feeling upset, stressed out, or overwhelmed.

Not Helpful	Not Helpful
<input type="checkbox"/> Suggestions or advice	<input type="checkbox"/> Raising their voices
<input type="checkbox"/> Touching me	<input type="checkbox"/> Talking to me
<input type="checkbox"/> Telling me what to do	<input type="checkbox"/> Telling me it will be fine
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
<input type="checkbox"/> Other:	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:

List of Self-Care Activities

Try and do at least one self-care activity weekly

Physical Activities	Psychological Activities
Do physical activities that are fun for me	Be curious
Eat regular, healthy meals (e.g., breakfast and lunch)	Do something at which I am a beginner
Exercise	Engage my intelligence in a new area: museum, art, performance, sport event, other culture
Get enough sleep	Let others know different aspects of me
Get massages or other body work	Make time for self-reflection
Get medical care when needed	Meditate
Get regular medical care for prevention	Notice my inner experience: dreams, thoughts, imagery, feelings
Practice martial arts	Practice receiving from others
Stretch	Read literature unrelated to work
Take a break from demanding technology	See a psychotherapist or counselor for myself
Take day trips or mini-vacations	Spend time outdoors
Take time off when I'm sick	Say no to extra responsibilities sometimes
Take vacations	Take steps to decrease stress in my life
Wear clothes I like	Write in a journal
Other:	Other:

Emotional Activities	Spiritual Activities
Allow myself to cry	Cherish optimism and hope
Express my outrage in constructive ways	Be open to mystery, to not knowing
Feel proud of myself	Express gratitude
Find things that make me laugh	Be open to inspiration
Maintain contact with supportive people	Appreciate life's nonmaterial aspects
Nurture others	Have awe-filled experiences
Pursue comforting activities, objects, people, relationships, places	Celebrate with rituals meaningful to me
Reread favorite books, rewatch favorite movies	Identify that which is meaningful to me and notice its place in my life
Spend time with others whose company I enjoy	Read inspirational literature
Stay in contact with important people in my life	Memorialize loved ones who have died
Stop and breathe deeply as needed	Make time for prayer, meditation, reflection
Support causes I believe in	Sing
Talk to myself kindly	Spend time in nature
Other:	Listen to inspiring music
Other:	Participate in a spiritual gathering or group

Self-Care Toolbox

Below are additional practices you can add to your self-care toolbox

1. **Humor:** Tell funny stories from your own life. Laugh at yourself. Invite friends to a 'joke-athon'. Watch funny movies and videos.
2. **Movement:** Dance; wave your arms. Conduct your favorite music. Take exercise breaks at work. Go for a walk. Engage in sports.
3. **Play:** Find games to play with friends. Allow yourself to be silly. Reconnect with your inner child.
4. **Pleasure and Nourishment:** Create and participate in activities for enjoyment only. Receive massages, attend concerts, cook favorite meals. Be with loving, energizing friends.
5. **Feeding the Spirit:** Find time to meditate. Be still or silent. Take solitary walks. Listen to inspirational music. Go to art galleries. Visit working farms and pick your own fruits and vegetables. Grow plants, spices and flowers in your home.
6. **Rest:** Respect your body's need for sleep. Lie on the grass and daydream. Own a comfortable bed with fluffy comforters and supportive pillows. Use sheets that feel good. Wear comfortable night clothes.
7. **Travel and Spas:** Choose interesting places to visit. Organize your travel activities so that you are not exhausted when you return. Spend time at cultural and performing festivals. Stay in one place an extend time instead of rushing from city to city. Choose a spa that offers sports, cultural activities, a good exercise program and well-prepared foods.
8. **Conference and Workshops:** Go to conferences and workshops on healing and spirituality.
9. **Posture and Balance:** Practice ways of standing, sitting and moving easefully while engaging in everyday activities. Befriend gravity by balancing your body and thinking "up". Support you upright position by lengthening your spine and relaxing your head and neck.
10. **Love and Friendships:** Cultivate friends like a garden full of colorful flowers, fragrant and mutually nurturing. Open your heart... to the love of family and friends. Cherish time with them. Share your life with people who love, respect and support you.
11. **Volunteering:** Contribute your time, energy and space to causes and people you believe in and want to help. Finds ways to support them that will have meaning for your. Support the healthy future of our planet.
12. **Space and Environment:** Listen to the relationship between your inner and outer space. Design a workplace that is comfortable and energizing. Create a home you love, no matter how small. Allow your inner life to guide you.
13. **Reading:** Return to the experience of living with the characters in novels. Expand your mind through biographies and works on history, philosophy, spirituality and science. Curl up in bed with a book.

Adapted from Rubenfeld, I. (2000). *The Listening Hand*, Bantam Books, New York, N.Y. and National Center on Safe and Supportive Learning Environments' Safe Place Training