

9 UNEXPECTED WAYS TO IMMEDIATELY REDUCE STRESS

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1. Hang Upside Down

If you don't have monkey bars in your living room, that's okay. Just stand with your legs shoulder width apart and bend forward till your head is upside down. It will cause more blood to rush to your brain which brings more oxygen to your brain, and this has a natural calming effect.

2. Give or Get a Hug

But none of these cold and stiff pat-pat hugs. It has to be a warm and genuine embrace that lasts at least 3 seconds. Not only does a hug like this help us feel safe, loved and connected, it also causes your brain to release serotonin which is the happy and calming chemical.

3. Ujjayi Breath

If you're a yogi, you know this one already. If you're not, don't worry, it's easy to learn. To create the Ujjayi breath, you'll need to constrict the back of your throat, similar to the constriction made when speaking in a whisper. Think of it as an audible breath from the back of your throat that sounds like the ocean. Although there is a constriction of the throat, the Ujjayi breath flows in and out through the nostrils, with the lips remaining gently closed. Because of the force of airflow involved in this type of breath, when done intentionally it can feel like we are literally pushing the stress and tension out of our bodies. And you will notice the release of tension immediately.

Repeat this breath slowly and deeply 8 times.

4. Walk or Stand Like a Boss

Often when we are stressed we hunch and tense our shoulders and thus end up walking, standing, or sitting with poor posture. And then, because we are not holding our bodies properly, they start to get sore and achy which can cause us to feel even more stressed out and tense. So, get up, pull your shoulders back, open up your chest, and put your head up and walk around like you are the most confident person you know.

This is simply a case of fake it till you make it. When our bodies show confidence our brain soon starts to believe we are confident and connecting with our inner strength in that way helps us feel more in control and less stressed out.

5. Walk around the block

No, I'm not going to force you to go for a 1.5 hour HIIT workout in order to reduce your stress (unless that's your thing - and if so, totally go for it!). But did you know that just taking a 10 minute walk outside in the fresh air can make you go from a complete ball of nerves to feeling calm, happy, and grounded? That's because of the oxytocin (another happy and calm chemical) that flows through the brain when we move our whole body.

6. Pen and Paper to Bed

Often we get stressed when we feel like we have a lot of things to get done, and are also worried about remembering to do them all. So we lay in bed at night getting stuck in the brain swirl of trying to make sure we remember to do it all the next day. As you know, this is not at all a calm and pleasant feeling while we are laying in bed trying to fall asleep. So take the pencil and paper and keep it on your bedside table. And then, as soon as a thought pops in to your head that you don't want to forget the next day, instead of trying to finagle a way to keep it fresh in your memory as you sleep (or struggle trying to), write it down. Now it's free from your mind but will not be forgotten, and now you can get some sleep.

7. Drink a glass of water

Many of us are dehydrated much of the time. And they say if you wait till you are thirsty before having a glass of water, it's a sign that you are already too dehydrated. And when we are dehydrated our blood vessels constrict which can cause us to get tension headaches which will then add to any and all stress we were already feeling. So go and drink up!

8. Watch a Stupidly Funny Video on YouTube

As the super cheesy saying goes, laughter is the best medicine. And it is! It does wonders for reducing our stress and making us feel more calm and happy. So, silly cat and funny baby videos are an order.

9. Be generous

Giving out of love and generosity makes a bigger impact on our overall happiness and well being than anything else. So next time you're feeling stressed, give or do something kind and thoughtful for someone. It can be for someone you know, or someone you don't know. But make sure it's something you want to give and it has no strings attached. Just knowing we've done something that makes someone else feel good makes us feel good. And as feeling good goes up, feeling stressed goes down.