

10 Ways to Reduce Stress & Revitalize Your Life

Shake the Salt Habit

Feeling bloated? Salt may be partly to blame. Too much salt can cause you to retain water. And it can contribute to high blood pressure. Cut back on salt by choosing fresh (not canned or processed) foods and experimenting with other seasonings such as curry powder, garlic, cumin, or rosemary to give food some zing. You'll expand your culinary horizons and may find that you feel more energetic, too.

Stressed? Climb the Stairs

When you're angry or stressed, it's easy to grab a candy bar, smoke a cigarette, or gulp another cup of coffee to cope. The ideal antidote? Exercise. Next time you're stressed out or riled up, climb a flight of stairs (or two) or go for a quick stroll -- studies show even 10 minutes of exercise can provide a mental boost.

Put Down That Doughnut

Handle stress by eating? In tense times, you may choose comfort foods over fruits and vegetables. But when that rush from refined carbs or sugary food crashes, you'll be left feeling sluggish. Plus, extra calories can quickly add up to extra pounds -- increasing your risk for health problems. So next time you feel anxious, ignore the sweet stuff. Try munching on an apple or just take 10 deep breaths instead.

Get Your Beauty Sleep

Banish under-eye bags by hitting the hay. Experts recommend 7 to 8 hours of sleep a night to recharge and lower stress. Having trouble falling asleep? Don't drink caffeine past noon. Avoid exercise two hours before bedtime. Make your bedroom a sleep-only zone -- no TVs, pets, computers, or other distractions. If these tips don't work, talk to your doctor.

Get Out of That Rut

Mixing it up, whether by altering your routine or trying something new -- like changing your hairstyle -- can improve your outlook and mood. Driving a new route to work, walking the dog down a different street, or eating a new food for breakfast can help keep things fresh. Focus on one easy-to-accomplish change at a time to ensure success.

Walk Around the Block

You don't have to spend hours at the gym -- even a little movement can get you in touch with your body and help you regain energy. A simple walk around the block can clear your head, and exercises that involve a bit of meditation -- such as yoga or tai chi -- can help recharge both body and mind.

Eat More Fiber

Fiber can help you feel fuller faster so you eat less and lose weight. Getting enough fiber also keeps you regular and is good for the heart. So in addition to the health benefits, getting enough fiber can result in fewer things to be stressed about! The good news is that fiber comes in many tasty forms, from oatmeal and whole-grain breads and cereals to fruits such as apples, citrus, and strawberries, and vegetables.

Focus on the Present

Being aware of where you are and what is happening right now -- some call it mindfulness -- can help you relax instead of fretting over what's looming on the horizon. Let go of thoughts about the past or future, and focus on the present moment. How does the air feel against your skin? How does the pavement feel under your feet? If your mind wanders, just bring it back again to focus on the present.

Call the Doctor

We've all done it -- tried to ignore that miserable headache, persistent shoulder pain, or nagging cough. But ongoing health problems can sap vitality. Resolve to get your symptoms checked out by a physician. If you haven't had a physical in a while, schedule one now. And if you feel mental health care is in order, don't be afraid to discuss that with your doctor, too.

Feed Your Head

Sometimes the answer to having a lot on your mind is to do something that takes your brain in a completely different direction. Stretch mental boundaries by listening to a lecture on your iPod, doing a crossword puzzle, or joining a book club, and checking out the latest best seller. Or take up a new hobby that keeps you active mentally and physically, whether it's gardening or hiking.

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