

## Top 5 Secrets to Manage Stress

Finding ways to cope with daily stress is essential to staying and feeling young. Many experts believe your brain is possibly your strongest weapon against this aspect of life and aging. Here are some cutting-edge secrets that will help you to de-stress.

### Let faith bring you peace

There is a growing amount of scientific research that shows people with a strong, active religion are healthier, often live longer, and generally deal better with life's difficulties than those who are nonreligious. Many find believing in a higher power to be an immense source of comfort and peace. These people are usually more optimistic about the future because they believe events are part of a bigger plan. Having what is called a "prayerful, prayerlike" attitude – one of devotion and acceptance – can help you deal with stress.

### Quiet your thoughts

Just 20 minutes of focused relaxation a day could lengthen your life, lower your blood pressure and cholesterol, improve your mental health, and reduce chronic pain, anxiety, and stress. Here's how to discover the health benefits for yourself.

1. Find a quiet spot and rest comfortably. Take the phone off the hook, if necessary, and make sure you'll have no other distractions.
2. Close your eyes, breathe deeply, and relax all your muscles.
3. Think of a word or phrase with special meaning to you. It should be something uplifting, like the word "joy", or "peace." Or choose a favourite verse or prayer. Reflect on it quietly, pushing aside intrusive thoughts.
4. Continue to relax like this for about 10 to 20 minutes.

Meditation works best when you focus on someone or something else, ignoring fears and problems.

### Be mindful of the moment

When was the last time you noticed the tickle of peach fuzz on your lips, or how socks feel on your feet? Stress crops up when you worry about the future. If you can focus on the moment, the future and its problems will melt away. A practical example of this is called mindfulness, which requires you notice and accept the sensations and thoughts you experience as they happen.

This can be easier than you think. Start by learning how to really pay attention to your breathing.

1. Relax and follow your breath in and out. Notice the beginning, middle, and end of each in-breath.
2. Do the same with each out-breath. Notice the rise and fall of our chest or abdomen. Don't try to breathe any differently from your normal breathing.
3. Continue breathing slowly and evenly – with awareness – for 10 to 20 minutes.

Now practise this same mindfulness during your everyday activities. Chew your food slowly, for example, tasting every bite, and notice the different textures in your mouth. Experts believe mindfulness can bring on positive changes in how your brain and immune system respond to stress and disease.

### Loosen tense muscles

Just like ice cream heads straight for the hips, stress tends to get trapped in tight muscles. For example, holding on to stress can cause crippling back, neck and shoulder pain. To release your muscles, try simple progressive relaxation.

1. Find a comfortable position and begin breathing slowly and deeply.
2. Tense the muscles in your toes for a count of 10.
3. Release them slowly and completely while you count to 10.
4. Next tense the muscles of your feet in the same way.
5. Continue up the entire length of your body, tensing and relaxing every muscle group.
6. By the time you reach the top of your head, you should feel completely relaxed.

## Let laughter into your life

The cheapest medicine around – a bout of good humour – can put pain and problems in perspective. Studies show laughter lowers stress levels and boosts your immune system.

1. Laughter can relieve pain. But the humour works best this way if you choose your own “medicine.” So pick out your favourite comedy the next time you visit the video store and laugh your pain away.
2. Joke fall flat? Laugh anyway. Even forced laughter will improve your mood.
3. Check the TV listings for good comedies a week in advance. Anticipating mirth boosts your immune system about as much as the actual laughing does.

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### About the Author

Raymond Lee is one of the foremost experts in the health and fitness industry and is a writer specializing in body health, muscle development and dieting. He has spent countless of time and efforts conducting research and share his insightful and powerful secrets to benefit men and women all over the world. He is currently the author of the latest edition of "Neck Exercises and Workouts." Visit <http://www.bodyfixes.com> for more information. Don't forget to subscribe to his minicourse "15 Techniques & Tips Quickly Eliminate Neck Pain."