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# Simple Steps Toward Effective Stress Management

## Introduction

Humans are always on the go. Society prioritizes productivity and busyness—the more you accomplish, the better you are supposed to feel. Unfortunately, that's not how it works physiologically. When you put too many responsibilities on your plate, you end up feeling burnt out and stressed.

You aren't alone. Stress causes physical, emotional, and mental repercussions, which is why it is important to address it. Consider a few of our favorite methods for effective stress management.

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## Practice Meditation

There are many forms of meditation, from breathing exercises to yoga. Ultimately, the goal of any meditation is to bring you back to the present moment and keep you grounded. It helps you achieve mindfulness and prevents you from spiraling down the path of continued stress. In fact, one study found that mindfulness led to increased self-esteem and lessened symptoms of anxiety and depression.<sup>1</sup> Try to find a practice that reduces negative thoughts by refocusing your attention on a neutral stimulus, such as your breath. When you can focus on the steps that are right in front of you, you are less likely to worry about the additional responsibilities weighing you down.

When you start meditating, you might find it hard to focus. The world is full of distractions. Keep practicing your meditation until it becomes easier to sit still and relax for longer periods. Concentrate on becoming more aware of the world around you through things like deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, and visualization. These practices will help you stay anchored in the present moment and help you to feel less overwhelmed by all the external stressors vying for your attention.

## Get a Massage

Massages have been used to relieve stress for thousands of years—dating back to ancient China.<sup>2</sup> People often tense their muscles when they are stressed, which can lead to headaches and soreness throughout the body. Massage therapists specialize in relaxing those muscles to reduce pain and improve circulation. When you relieve the physical symptoms of stress, it allows you to think more clearly and begin seeing your situation differently.

Before you schedule a massage, do your research to determine the best place for you. Consider costs, reviews, and credibility to ensure that you are going to a reputable, respected massage therapist. Find an environment that will help you focus on healing your body and mind. Lastly, look for a massage therapist who will encourage holistic relaxation.

## Disconnect

It is easy to get lost in the latest headlines and updates—but the news is often one of the worst causes of stress. You might not even realize how much negativity you've been exposed to as you've surfed the web. Pay extra attention to what you read over the next few days—is it positive? Does it edify you? If it doesn't, it might be time to disconnect for a bit.

When we're tethered to technology and media, we become easily distracted. Some studies even suggest that excessive social media use leads to feelings of depression.<sup>3</sup> These feelings will only make stress worse, which is why it is important to step away from the online world and focus on the people around you. Try going for walks, appreciating the outdoors, or talking to people you trust. When you hold fast to the positive, the negatives won't overwhelm you.

## Exercise

Being active is an excellent way to strengthen your physical, mental, and emotional health. Exercise lowers your stress hormones and releases endorphins that naturally improve your mood.<sup>4</sup> Similar to meditation, it allows you to step away from the tension of day-to-day life and fully engage with just one activity.

You have many options when choosing an exercise routine. If you love being outside, consider walking or running, or try bicycling on nearby trails. If you appreciate social interaction or accountability, look into group classes offered at local gyms or parks. Pilates, dance, and yoga are optimal ways to relieve stress and release beneficial endorphins. A wealth of fitness programs are also available online.

## Take Vitamins and Supplements

To give your body an extra boost in managing stress, several supplements and vitamins have shown positive results. For example, make sure you're getting enough Omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin B—both of which contribute to a person's mood. Omega-3 fatty acids can be found naturally in wild

salmon, sprouted chia, flax seeds, and blue algae.<sup>5</sup> One study even showed that medical students who took Omega-3 supplements experienced a 20% reduction in anxiety levels.<sup>6</sup>

Vitamin B is known for promoting brain function and inducing relaxation. It is found in beans, peas, nuts, and eggs—all of which are easy to incorporate into meals or snacks.<sup>7</sup> If you don't think you're getting enough vitamin B from natural sources, you can also find supplements in most health food stores. If your body doesn't have the sustenance it needs to fight off stress, you'll have an even harder time managing external factors.

## Conclusion

No matter what your job is—whether you're a stay-at-home parent, a corporate executive, or a student—it's normal to feel stressed about mounting responsibilities. If you struggle to cope with overwhelming challenges, you are putting your wellness at risk. Ignoring stress affects your immune system and mental function. Putting these tips into practice will support your well-being, no matter what life throws your way.

If you're interested in other stress management techniques to fortify your health—from aromatherapy to naturopathy—check out our programs on our website. Our courses are completely online, which ensures that you can balance your time effectively and complete your assignments on your schedule. Contact us today to take the next step in your wellness journey.

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