

Relieving Stress

Daily Detoxification

Certain aspects come to mind instantly when we think of health; we know that we need a nutritious diet, and that exercise is important. We may even know that stress relief is important and yet, for most of us, it is left out of our daily routine, only to be picked up when the time is right. We leave work Friday afternoon and immediately try to 'unwind' for the weekend, or schedule one week vacations a couple of times a year to try to 'de-stress' from months of work. The truth is, compartmentalizing stress relief doesn't work and does not provide us with consistent respite. What's worse, we as a society are becoming more and more stressed and it is literally making us sick. Stress increases cortisol, belly fat, and inflammation; it increases the incidence of cardiovascular disease, raises your blood sugar, and has recently been linked to create imbalance in your gut microbiome.

Ultimately, many stress relief plans go as followed: start meditating 30 minutes every day, take up a yoga class, exercise more, etc etc. The foundation of most plans is to add more in to our overfilled days. The common (and understandable) response is, generally, "aint nobody got time for that!" So before you start the rally cry, let's look at some alternative ways to manage your stress that don't involve hours of your day.....

Reduce the Stress You Can Avoid

Many of us take on more than we can handle – we feel pressure to extend our workdays, always be available over email, and connected to our phones at all times. One of the most powerful changes we can make to decrease stress is to create boundaries around work and personal time. Along the same lines, saying 'No' can be a powerful tact. Many successful people swear by 'Not To Do' lists, a list that helps to reign in taking on unnecessary tasks, over-communication, and the myth of 'multitasking'. This can be unnerving at first – 'what if my boss feels I'm not doing enough?', 'what if I let clients down?' Do it for a week and look for increases in productivity, focus, and passion for your work, qualities that any boss or client can get behind. Lastly, take a step back from 'the drama'. How often do you feel stressed because you've been drawn into an argument that really wasn't yours to fight, had a friend unload their crisis on you, or let an angry driver or store clerk put a damper on your day? Your happiness, like your health, is yours to protect; whenever possible, make a decision to remove yourself from situations that are not productive to your wellbeing.

Change Your Appraisal of Stress You Cannot Avoid

Sometimes we cannot remove the stressor – there's been an accident on the highway and you're stuck for hours, the lovely Vancouver rain has put a damper on your walk to work, or a project's deadline has suddenly been moved up. We can immediately shift to a deficit mindset and focus on everything that we now lack ('I'm not going to get home until late, it's grey and dark out, I don't have enough time to do the best possible job' etc.) and declare "I'M SO STRESSED". Or, we can re-appraise the situation from a place of abundance ('I have time in the car to myself, why don't I listen to a podcast?, the rain makes me appreciate our warm summers and how mild our winters are, being on a deadline will help eliminate the procrastination I would usually experience during a project'). It may not feel like sunshine and roses from day one, but over time you will begin to see that there is always an alternative perspective.

Feel the Way You Feel

Looking on the bright side should not be confused with suppressing your emotions deep down until you can no longer feel them. At times, we can alter our perspective and recognize that there's a brighter side to what we are experiencing. Other times, bad things do happen to good people – our health, or the health of our loved ones is threatened, we experience loss, and we face disappointment. When these emotions come up, fighting them creates an internal conflict, a stress that we can choose to dissolve by simply acknowledging our true feelings. Provide yourself with the space and time to feel the way you truly feel and reflect on it. By doing so, you can create a distance between feeling and reacting and remove yourself from a feeling-suppressing pattern.





Choose a Stress Relief Practice You Enjoy

Okay, okay, I know I said we weren't going to add an activity to your routine but bear with me. The most important stress relief practice is the one you will actually do. This means that your stress relief routine likely won't look like mine, or your best friend's, or your spouse's. Some of us swear by meditation, others find that going for a run really allows them to unwind after a day of work. Whatever your flavor, simply ensure that it's something you can do most days, doesn't require too much time, doesn't harm other aspects of your health, and is something you will do most days -because you enjoy it and see the value in it.

Ideas to Get You Started:

- Take a walk in nature
- Deep Breathing
- Bubble Bath
- Read a good book
- Repeat affirmations
- Gratitude Journal
- 30 Seconds dance party
- Sketch
- Go for a run

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