

## Learning How to Relax

Feeling stressed is a normal, healthy response to life's challenges. When prolonged, however, stress can have adverse effects on health and general well-being. Learning to reduce stress and relax can improve your outlook and help you to respond to new situations more positively. Try the following techniques:

### Deep Breathing

Breathing from our chests or shoulders can create more tension and stress by preventing air from reaching the bottom of our lungs, increasing blood pressure and preparing the body for action. Deep breathing focuses on using the diaphragm (the spot just under your rib cage) to draw slow, deep breaths of air into the lungs and to release them slowly.

### Stretching and Yoga

Stress often appears as tension in our necks, shoulders and head, what's commonly referred to as the stress triangle. Stretching exercises can relieve tension, make your body more flexible and produce a calming effect. Yoga is a more formal method of stretching, but even just shrugging your shoulders, stretching your arms and rolling your neck a few times a day can have positive effects.

### Massage

Physically, massage can help alleviate tense muscles, lower blood pressure, promote deep breathing and improve posture. Mental benefits of massage include reduced anxiety, increased body awareness and enhanced creativity.

### Meditation and Visualization

Meditation involves "quieting the mind" by blocking out sensory input and distraction, while visualization involves using the brain's creative capacity to create a stress-free experience, much like daydreaming. Both meditation and visualization can be helpful in relieving stress.

Visit GuidanceResources Online for more information on these techniques and to find other resources to help you learn how to relax.

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