



Stress Management

Relaxation Techniques



Being a caregiver is extremely rewarding and crucially important.

At the same time, it can be highly demanding with no distinct beginnings or end each day because the caregiver is often the lifeline for those they care for. Juggling multiple roles, both within and outside of your family, continual challenges and changes, is consuming and exhausting!

Stress response floods the body with chemicals that prepare you for "fight or flight." But while these stress responses are helpful in an emergency situation it wears the body down when constantly activated.

You can't avoid stress, but you can learn how to counter its negative effects. Make it a priority to find a relaxation technique that works for you!

Bodies cared for:

- are more responsive with increased stamina.
- provide the feeling of being in control.
- have a greater overall sense of well-being

Taking time for yourself must be the foundation of quality caregiving!

If you don't take care of yourself, you can't take care of your loved one.



70% of caregivers reported needing help with things such as "finding time to relax, managing their emotions and physical stress, and balancing work and family responsibilities."

Relaxation Response Techniques

Did you know?

- Relaxation response has calming physical effects, increases energy and focus, combats illness, relieves aches and pains, and heightens problem solving. It's easy to do but takes commitment to find a time to relax each day to harness your stress-relieving power.
- Relaxation can also relieve anxiety, depression, and sleep problems.

Tense Your Way to Relaxation

Progressive Muscle Relaxation enables you to relax all of your body quickly, by using a two-step process in which you systematically tense and relax different muscle groups in the body.

- Forehead** - wrinkle for three seconds then relax.
- Eyebrow** - raise for three seconds then relax.
- Lips** - press tightly for three seconds then relax.
- Tongue** - press tightly to top of mouth then relax.
- Shoulders** - raise and hold then relax.

Continue to tense the neck, arms, hands, working down to your legs and toes.

Massage Therapy

Getting a massage provides deep relaxation, and as the muscles in the body relax, so does your overstressed mind. And you don't have to visit the spa to enjoy the benefits of massage. Try these simple self-massage techniques to relax and release stress.



Self-Massage Techniques

Source: Northwestern Health Sciences University

Scalp Soother

Place your thumbs behind your ears while spreading your fingers on top of your head. Move your scalp back and forth slightly by making circles with your fingertips for 15-20 seconds.

Easy on the Eyes

Close your eyes and place your ring fingers directly under your eyebrows, near the bridge of your nose. Slowly increase the pressure for 5-10 seconds, then gently release. Repeat 2-3 times.

Shoulder Tension Relief

Reach one arm across the front of your body to your opposite shoulder. Using a circular motion, press firmly on the muscle above your shoulder blade. Repeat on the other side.

Hand Therapy

Stretch your hands and fingers out. Rub each finger from the base to the tip, gently pulling and twisting each finger as you go. Next, rest your left hand, palm upward, on your lap. Squeeze the fleshy part of your palm between your right thumb and index finger, moving from your wrist to the base of your thumb. Now squeeze the web between your left index finger and thumb several times, looking for any tender points. Rub the entire palm with your right thumb, applying firm pressure and using gliding strokes from the wrist to the base of each finger. Repeat with your right hand.

More Ways to Relax

Yoga classes that emphasize slow, steady movement and gentle stretching are best for stress relief.

Music reduces tension, blood pressure and promotes a feeling of tranquility. It has a way of wrapping around your heart and binding up the ache.



Humor provides a physical and emotional release to relax and helps you view events as challenges instead of threats making them seem less threatening and more positive.

Sleep fuels the mind as well as the body. Feeling tired will increase your stress because it may cause you to think irrationally. The fragrance of lavender is relaxing and conducive to sleep.

Peppermint tea, sugar free candy and fresh mint helps relieve stress.

Try These

Light a candle. Smell the fragrance lavender. Walk a pet. Play an instrument. Enjoy a hobby. Call a friend. Take a nap. Read. Drink a cup of hot tea. Work a puzzle. Go through a photo album...

Stress relief activities can be any simple, natural activity which

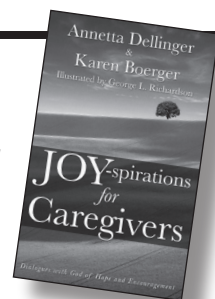
- eases your heart
- gives you delight and
- helps you to feel better

Sometimes the best stress relief is to

- be still
- meditate/pray
- count your blessings



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ISBN 13: 978-1-60615-026-9
Soft Cover \$19.99 US
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These pages are guidelines. It is always wise to consult with a trained health care professional for appropriate recommendations for your situation.