

10 Ways to De-stress

Many of us spend a lot of our days stressed and rely on the weekend or, worse, on taking a few days' holiday once or twice a year, to relax and de-stress. Some of us even find it difficult to relax without a drink or a cigarette, or to fall asleep without taking a tranquiliser.

To stay healthy and happy, we need to get the right mix between stress and relaxation in our lives.

Look at what might be causing you stress. Eliminate any unnecessary stressors and learn new ways to deal with others, such as seeing the stressor as a challenge. Learn a few conscious relaxation techniques and use them regularly. Explore new ways of expanding your mind. Honour yourself, your priorities, goals and dreams and create environments that nurture and support you.

As a life coach, I can also help you! Please feel free to call me if you'd like to discuss and gain insight into your situation.

Here are 10 techniques and therapies I recommend to regain a sense of physical and mental relaxation:

1. **Massage:**

A massage will not only relieve stiff, tired muscles, it also has a wonderful effect on our sense of wellbeing, as it encourages the release of 'feel good' endorphins. My absolute favourite is a foot massage.

2. **Meditation:**

Meditating a little each day is a great way to regain a sense of wholeness. I highly recommend two meditation resources:

1. Shirley MacLaine's *Inner Workout*, a beautiful guided chakra-balancing meditation and
2. An amazing meditation CD that I often listen to, which you can find at www.meditate.com.au.

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3. **Yoga stretches:**

Have you ever watched a cat waking up? The cat will often start with an exaggerated yawn, then arch its back until stretched to its limit, before slowly letting go. Cats know instinctively the value of stretching to maintain flexibility. Inflexibility within our bodies can in turn affect our mental flexibility and we can become stuck in thought as well as action. If you spend a lot of your working days sitting at a desk, you might like to try the 'seated cat stretch.' Pull your chair back from your desk slightly to give yourself more room, then gently bend forward, without straining and clasp your ankles. Carefully arch your back to stretch, then relax back into your chair and repeat. Too hard? Then you might like to find a yoga class or teacher near you. I really enjoyed attending weekly pre-natal yoga classes throughout my pregnancy and did my last class a few days before Jake was born.

4. **Flower essences and remedies:**

Edward Bach (a medical doctor) developed *Bach flower remedies* in the 1930s. His 38 master essences capture the vibrational healing essence of plants to heal emotional imbalances. His *Rescue remedy*, a combination of five flower extracts of rock rose, impatiens, clematis, star of bethlehem and cherry plum, can help at times when you need comfort and reassurance. Or, try the Australian equivalent, *Emergency essence*, from *Australian bush flower essences*.

5. **Emotional freedom technique (EFT) or Energy tapping:**

I love this technique. It's the all-time, most powerful and quickest stress management tool I know. What I especially love about it, is that you can use it almost anywhere, anytime. It takes just a few minutes to do and can reduce your stress levels by half in less than 5 minutes! If you'd like to learn this technique, from the comfort of home, please visit my website at www.blueskycoaching.com.au/energytapping.php. I have three *Energy Tapping Workshop* DVD packages available for you to choose from, or, if you'd prefer, I'd be delighted to teach you E.F.T. in a one-to-one session either in person or by telephone. You might also like to visit www.emofree.com, the content-rich website of the creator of E.F.T., Gary Craig.

6. **Reflexology:**

A reflexology session can be both relaxing and stimulating. During a treatment, all parts of the feet are stimulated. As muscle tensions are relaxed and the nerve supply freed from constriction, the body slips into a deep state of relaxation. At the same time, the circulation is being stimulated to bring nutrients to all parts of the body and remove toxins.

7. **Shiatsu:**

A traditional Japanese remedial therapy in which the practitioner might use thumbs, hands, arms, elbows, knees and even feet to apply gentle yet firm pressure. Holding, stretching and a range of motion techniques are also used to assess, relax, harmonise and balance the flow of energy throughout the body. A typical treatment might also incorporate accupressure. Devotees of Shiatsu will tell you it's the ultimate stress buster.

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8. T'ai Chi:

This is an ancient form of slow, graceful and rhythmic exercise that originated in China and is often performed in parks in the fresh morning air. It has its roots in Taoist philosophy. The movements gently tone and strengthen the organs and muscles, improve circulation and posture and relax both mind and body.

9. Bath bliss:

It's easy to forget the stress-relieving potential of a long, lazy bath. Water - especially when fortified with essential oils or sea salt - has the power to soothe, heal and relax a tense body and lift a fatigued spirit. When using oils in the bath, add five drops just before you get in. The oils will form a thin film on the surface of the water and, aided by the relaxing warmth of the water, will be absorbed by your skin to produce an immediate psychological and physiological effect as you breathe in the scent. To relax and unwind, try a blend of three drops of lavender and two drops on ylang ylang.

10. Spring Forest Qi Gong:

Another beautiful exercise, which I've found profoundly relaxing, is called *Breathing of the universe*. It works by balancing the energy both outside and inside your body. To do this, stand with your toes pointed forward, your knees slightly bent. Then, set your feet a little more than shoulder width apart for good balance. Look forward. Smile. Relax! Draw your chin back a little to straighten the spine. Open your fingers. Drop your shoulders. Now shift your elbows outward a little. Slowly take three deep, silent and gentle breaths. Imagine using your whole body to breathe. Visualise the universal energy coming into every cell of your body. When you exhale, visualise any pain or sickness changing into smoke and shooting out from every cell in your body to the ends of the universe. Close your eyes and lips and repeat the password *'I am in the universe. The universe is in my body. The universe and I combine together.'* Take a moment to feel the emptiness, the quietness, the stillness of the universe. Start with your hands poised in front of you, fingers parted, as if holding a large ball. As you inhale, move your hands away from each other to the sides. As you exhale, bring your hands back together, but without touching. Feel the energy in the space between your hands as you move them apart and back together again. Do the exercise for six minutes. When finished, sit and relax for several minutes.

For more information on Spring Forest Qi Gong, call US toll-free 877-511-1100.

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