

101 WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS

General List of Coping Activities

1. Get up earlier
2. Prepare ahead
3. Avoid tight clothes
4. Avoid chemical aids
5. Set appointments
6. Write it down
7. Practice preventive maintenance
8. Make duplicate keys
9. Say "no" more often
10. Set priorities
11. Avoid negative people
12. Use time wisely
13. Simplify meals
14. Copy important papers
15. Anticipate needs
16. Make repairs
17. Get help with jobs you dislike
18. Break down large tasks
19. Look at problems as challenges
20. Look at challenges differently
21. Unclutter your life
22. Smile
23. Prepare for rain
24. Tickle a baby
25. Pet a dog or cat
26. Don't know all the answers
27. Look for the silver lining
28. Say something nice
29. Teach a kid to fly a kite
30. Walk in the rain
31. Schedule playtime
32. Take a bubble bath
33. Be aware of your decisions
34. Believe in yourself
35. Stop talking negatively
36. Visualize winning
37. Develop a sense of humor
38. Stop thinking tomorrow will be better
39. Have goals
40. Dance a jig
41. Say hello to a stranger
42. Ask a friend for a hug
43. Look at the stars
44. Breathe slowly
45. Whistle a tune
46. Read a poem
47. Listen to a symphony
48. Watch a ballet
49. Read a story
50. Do something new
51. Stop a bad habit
52. Buy a flower
53. Smell a flower
54. Find support
55. Find a "vent partner"
56. Do it today
57. Be optimistic
58. Put safety first
59. Do things in moderation
60. Note your appearance
61. Strive for excellence, not perfection
62. Stretch your limits
63. Enjoy art
64. Hum a jingle
65. Maintain your weight
66. Plant a tree
67. Feed the birds
68. Practice grace

69. Stretch
70. Have a plan B
71. Doodle
72. Learn a joke
73. Know your feelings
74. Meet your needs
75. Know your limits
76. Say, "Have a good day,"
in pig Latin
77. Throw a paper airplane
78. Exercise
79. Learn a new song
80. Go to work earlier
81. Clean a closet
82. Play with a child
83. Go on a picnic
84. Drive a different route to work
85. Leave work early
86. Put air freshener in your car
87. Watch a movie and eat popcorn
88. Write a faraway friend
89. Scream at a ball game
90. Eat a meal by candlelight
91. Recognize the importance of
unconditional love
92. Remember that stress is an attitude
93. Keep a journal
94. Share a monster smile
95. Remember your options
96. Build a support network
97. Quit trying to fix others
98. Get enough sleep
99. Talk less and listen more
100. Praise others
101. Relax, take each day at a time . . . you
have the rest of your life to live

B. Personal List of 10 Most Effective Stress Reducers

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|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

1. Hands, forearms, and biceps
2. Head, face, throat, and shoulders, including concentration on forehead, cheeks, nose, eyes, jaws, lips, tongue, and neck. Considerable attention is devoted to your head, because from the emotional point of view, the most important muscles in your body are situated in and around this region.
3. Chest, stomach, and lower back.
4. Thighs, buttocks, calves, and feet.

Progressive relaxation can be practiced lying down or in a chair with your head supported. Each muscle or muscle grouping is tensed from five to seven seconds and then relaxed for twenty to thirty seconds. This procedure is repeated at least once. If an area remains tense, you can practice up to five times. You may also find it useful to use the following relaxing expressions when untensing:

Let go of the tension.

Throw away the tension—I am feeling calm and rested.

Relax and smooth out the muscles.

Let the tension dissolve away.

Once the procedure is familiar enough to be remembered, keep your eyes closed and focus attention on just one muscle group at a time. The instructions for progressive relaxation are divided into two sections. The first part, which you may wish to tape and replay when practicing, will familiarize you with the muscles in your body which are most commonly tense. The second section shortens the procedure by simultaneously tensing and relaxing many muscles at one time so that deep muscle relaxation can be achieved in a very brief period.

Basic Procedure

Get in a comfortable position and relax. Now clench your right fist, tighter and tighter, studying the tension as you do so. Keep it clenched and notice the tension in your fist, hand, and forearm. Now relax. Feel the looseness in your right hand, and notice the contrast with the tension. Repeat this procedure with your right fist again, always noticing as you relax that this is the opposite of tension—relax and feel the difference. Repeat the entire procedure with your left fist, then both fists at once.

Now bend your elbows and tense your biceps. Tense them as hard as you can and observe the feeling of tautness. Relax, straighten out your arms. Let the relaxation develop and feel that difference. Repeat this, and all succeeding procedures at least once.

Turning attention to your head, wrinkle your forehead as tight as you can. Now relax and smooth it out. Let yourself imagine your entire forehead and scalp becoming smooth and at rest. Now frown and notice the strain spreading throughout your forehead. Let go. Allow your brow to become smooth again. Close your eyes now, squint them tighter. Look for the tension. Relax your eyes. Let them remain closed gently and comfortably. Now clench your jaw, bite hard. notice the tension throughout your jaw. Relax your jaw. When the jaw is relaxed, your lips will

slightly parted. Let yourself really appreciate the contrast between tension and relaxation. Now press your tongue against the roof of your mouth. Feel the ache in the back of your mouth. Relax. Press your lips now, purse them into an "O." Relax your lips. Notice that your forehead, scalp, eyes, jaw, tongue and lips are all relaxed.

Press your head back as far as it can comfortably go and observe the tension in your neck. Roll it to the right and feel the changing locus of stress, roll it to the left. Straighten your head and bring it forward, press your chin against your chest. Feel the tension in your throat, the back of your neck. Relax, allowing your head to return to a comfortable position. Let the relaxation deepen. Now shrug your shoulders. Keep the tension as you hunch your head down between your shoulders. Relax your shoulders. Drop them back and feel the relaxation spreading through your neck, throat and shoulders, pure relaxation, deeper and deeper.

Give your entire body a chance to relax. Feel the comfort and the heaviness. Now breathe in and fill your lungs completely. Hold your breath. Notice the tension. Now exhale, let your chest become loose, let the air hiss out. Continue relaxing, letting your breath come freely and gently. Repeat this several times, noticing the tension draining from your body as you exhale. Next, tighten your stomach and hold. Note the tension, then relax. Now place your hand on your stomach. Breathe deeply into your stomach, pushing your hand up. Hold, and relax. Feel the contrast of relaxation as the air rushes out. Now arch your back, without straining. Keep the rest of your body as relaxed as possible. Focus on the tension in your lower back. Now relax, deeper and deeper.

Tighten your buttocks and thighs. Flex your thighs by pressing down your heels as hard as you can. Relax and feel the difference. Now curl your toes downward, making your calves tense. Study the tension. Relax. Now bend your toes toward your face, creating tension in your shins. Relax again.

Feel the heaviness throughout your lower body as the relaxation deepens. Relax your feet, ankles, calves, shins, knees, thighs, and buttocks. Now let the relaxation spread to your stomach, lower back, and chest. Let go more and more. Experience the relaxation deepening in your shoulders, arms, and hands. Deeper and deeper. Notice the feeling of looseness and relaxation in your neck, jaws, and all your facial muscles.

Shorthand Procedure

The following is a procedure for achieving deep muscle relaxation quickly. Whole muscle groups are simultaneously tensed and then relaxed. As before, repeat each procedure at least once, tensing each muscle group from five to seven seconds and then relaxing from 15 to 30 seconds. Remember to notice the contrast between the sensations of tension and relaxation.

1. Curl both fists, tightening biceps and forearms (Charles Atlas pose). Relax.
2. Wrinkle up forehead. At the same time, press your head as far back as possible, roll it clockwise in a complete circle, reverse. Now wrinkle up the muscles of your face like a walnut: frowning, eyes squinted, lips pursed, tongue pressing the roof of the mouth, and shoulders hunched. Relax.
3. Arch back as you take a deep breath into the chest. Hold. Relax. Take a deep breath, pressing out the stomach. Hold. Relax.

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