Short-Term Stress Relief

Even in the middle of the most insane day, there are lots of things you can do that will immediately lower your stress level and help you both feel better, and create a small space in which you can begin to figure out how to lower your stresses over the long term. Additionally, getting the needle on your personal stress meter out of the red zone stops the current wear and tear on your body, and it helps prevent your brain and hormones from getting so sensitized to stress that they overreact to it in the future.

That’s why we recommend that you try to feel good as often as you can, at least several times each day. These experiences are more than enjoyable: they help protect your body against future stresses, improve problem solving, and stop downward spirals. The occasional getaway for a weekend is great, but regular, daily, positive experiences will make much more difference for you over the long run.

Below, we’ve listed lots of ways to get your stress meter into the green. Many of them will take only a minute or so, and you can do the ones that take longer while nursing, tending to children, doing housework, or driving. And we heartily encourage you to use whatever stress-reducing techniques you have discovered on your own, as well.

One-Minute Soothers

- Take four long, slow breaths, and as you exhale, imagine that a gray cloud of stress, worries, or troubles is leaving your life, and as you inhale, imagine that peace and love and wisdom are filling you up.
- Take your shoes off, rub the bottoms of your feet with your knuckles, and massage the joints and tips of your toes.
- Smell something nice, like an orange or your child’s hair, or put on a dab of perfume.
- Roll your head around to loosen your neck.
- Splash water on your face.
- While standing, bend over to touch the floor, shake your arms loosely, and straighten up slowly as you take in a big breath.
- Look at something pretty.
- Knead your neck and shoulders.
- Nibble something good.
- Rub your eyes and the bones around them gently.
- Hug your child or partner for one whole minute.
- Stretch your mouth open as wide as you can, like a lion roaring, and then let your face relax.
- Remember a good joke.
- Repeat a favorite saying or prayer to yourself.

Five-Minute Soothers

- Make yourself a cup of tea.
• Lie down, close your eyes, and imagine a warm, golden balm settling over you, softening the edges of your feelings, and gently carrying away any distress.
• Listen to your favorite music, from Bach to the B-52s.
• Ask someone for a sincere compliment.
• Step outside and watch the play of sunlight dancing on leaves, or the moon and the stars.
• Do a few minutes of stretching or yoga.

**Fifteen-Minute Soothers**
• Take a long shower.
• Read a magazine.
• Go for a short walk and look for beauty.
• Arrange flowers in a vase.
• Cuddle up with your children or your partner.
• Call a friend for a quick chat.
• Be especially loving with someone.
• Lie down for a brief nap.
• Meditate for fifteen minutes.
• Exercise, dance, stretch, or do yoga.

**Thirty-Minute Soothers**
• Read a good book.
• Take a bath - maybe with bubbles.
• Watch a TV show.
• Go for a walk.
• Treat yourself to a good nap.
• Trade a neck rub or foot massage with your partner.
• Do some art or a craft.
• Play a musical instrument.
• Put some flowers in every room in the house.
• Call a friend and really talk.
• Make love with your partner.

**One-Hour Soothers**
• Go for a run, swim, or bike ride, even if you have to arrange special child care to get an hour to yourself.
• Get a manicure.
- Go out to lunch with your partner, a friend, or a good book.
- Visit your church or temple.
- Browse through a bookstore.
- Provide a simple charitable service to someone in greater need than you.
- Go for a walk in a park.
- Prepare a really nice meal just for you, or treat yourself to a special lunch

Read more on FamilyEducation: http://life.familyeducation.com/parents/stress/35846.html#ixzz3QhSo9PEk