

# Manage Stress

Many aspects of life can be stressful. Explore these relaxation techniques today, and start your journey to building healthy habits.

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We all know the impact that stress can make on our bodies and on our minds. Whether you're experiencing everyday stress or you're suffering from prolonged stress caused by an ongoing circumstance in your life, one thing is certain — you need to help yourself relax! Thankfully, there are all kinds of relaxation techniques to counteract the stressors life throws at us.

Staying Sharp examines various relaxation techniques. The best is the one that resonates with you personally. We share three of our favorites below.

## Decompression

To counteract more physical forms of stress, try this simple technique: Apply a warm heat wrap to your neck and shoulder area for 10 to 15 minutes. Making sure to relax the muscles in your face and throughout your upper body. Foam rollers can work wonders on highly stressed areas of the back and legs. Or, if you've got the time (and money), get the full decompression experience by visiting your local massage therapist.

## Meditation

Meditation is a powerful way to calm your heart rate, focus attention and increase awareness of potential sources of stress. Research has found that regular meditation can even change the structure of the brain and strengthen the hippocampus, an area of the brain crucial for memory and learning. The two most popular meditation techniques are mindfulness (being aware of any feelings, thoughts, ideas as they present themselves) and concentrative (disciplined focus on a mantra, a singular sound or image). Sit comfortably with eyes closed; best practices recommend staying engaged between 15 to 20 minutes, although newcomers may be challenged to do more than a few minutes. Start small, stay consistent, and don't give up!

## Movement

Getting the body moving and the blood flowing has been demonstrated to heighten mental stimulation and is one of the very best stress relievers. Try practices such as yoga to actively engage body and mind, and increase flexibility and balance, effectively reducing stress levels. If all you have time for is a walk or a jog, take the opportunity to counteract the cortisol and enjoy the sense of well-being brought on by the presence of endorphins in the brain.

Use these techniques and more to slow down your heart rate and breathing, bring down your blood pressure, return your blood sugar to a normal level, increase blood flow to painful areas, relieve tension, elevate your mood, boost confidence, increase your energy level, sharpen your concentration and even get a better night's sleep!

Looking for more ways to manage your stress? Check out what's part of the [Find Your Calm](#) Guide.

## AARP

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