



Practicing Self-Care When You Are Stressed

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Practicing Self-Care

When You Are Stressed

A guide with useful tips and protocols for managing stress

Women's Integrative Health

www.womensintegrativehealthny.com

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Favorite Tools for Self-Care

It is so important to practice self-care when you are under a lot of stress. Self-care can very easily fall to the wayside. Self-care does not have to take up a lot of your time. Even just a few minutes of self-care is so worth it and can bring a bright spot to your day.

The more you make stress-reduction a daily habit, the more you can call upon your routine when it gets really bad.

Do whatever centers and calms you. Enjoy whatever process you choose. If it brings you joy, you will want to do it regularly.

Here are some favorite self-care tools:

Meditation and prayer – Light a candle – make an altar – use essential oils, rocks or sacred gifts. Begin by ringing a bell or lighting a candle. Ask for guidance for the day. Let out all your concerns. Set an intention. Sit quietly with your thoughts.

Journaling – This is a great place to go to get answers and be creative. Putting the pen to the paper brings forth wisdom! When something is bothering you, start writing – your Higher Self will take over and provide you with incredible insights. Writing what you are grateful for on that day is also good to write down. You might feel empowered and very tapped into yourself. You may even find that insight, fulfillment and validation is right there inside you!

Self-acupressure – If you are feeling tense, have a headache or indigestion or just want to relax, light a candle, put on relaxing music and give yourself some acupressure love. Get in touch with your body, where you are holding tension, anxiety, emotions or your breath. The body will also give you great insights, if you are willing to listen!

Self-care isn't meant to be a chore. Think of it as your daily vacation! It is something you can look forward to. You are worth it!

Practicing Self-Care When You Are Stressed

A Guide to Committing to Self-Care

Our adrenal glands can handle acute stressful situations with no problem, but they cannot handle chronic stress. Chronic stress taxes our adrenals. When our adrenals have a lot of stress place on them, it puts our body into a state of catabolism. Catabolism is the break-down of our bodies. Over time the body will slow down the thyroid as a protective measure. To maintain both thyroid and adrenal health, we must consider the health of our stress management skills each day. The thyroid function is reliant on the adrenals. Each of our endocrine glands play a key role in the health of the others. Adrenal fatigue may lead to not only thyroid issues, but a compromised immune system as well.

Ways to support proper adrenal function:

Nourish –

- Eat a whole food nutrient dense diet.
- Exercise regularly – start slow and with a good plan!
- Consider specific nutritional supplementation for adrenal support.
- Avoid caffeine, nicotine and alcohol.

Make a stress reduction plan and stick with it!

- Meditation
- Yoga
- Pay attention to breath pattern- slow your breathing down consciously during stressful situations.
- Replace known stressful situation with something you deeply enjoy.
- Sleep! A good 8 hours a night of restful sleep is restorative for the adrenal glands. Create a dark, quiet, comfortable environment for sleeping. Avoid sugar, caffeine and alcohol prior to going to bed for the night. Avoid the computer and TV prior to sleeping.
- Listen to your body – it will tell you what it needs!

Unplug, rest and recharge!

One of the most important strategies for easing stress is to give our bodies and minds time to recover. Sometimes a short midday nap or 10 minutes lying down comfortably can offer a profound recharge.

Some Home Remedies for Un-stressing Our Body!

Try them and see how they help to de-stress!



Lavender Foot Soak

½ cup Epsom Salt
2 Tablespoons Baking Soda
(optional Baking Soda makes skin smoother)
6 drops Lavender Essential Oil

Mix together and enjoy! Just what tired feet need and the lavender essential oils will help with help your body to relax!

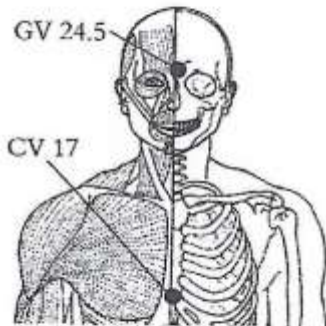


2/3 cup white sugar
1/2 cup coconut oil
8 – 10 drops Peppermint Essential Oil

Mix together and use after the Lavender foot soak. Guaranteed to help bring your stress levels down!

Acupressure Tips for Relieving Stress

Practicing these hands-on techniques will help you to manage stress and frustration. As you do these and the yoga poses, it may be helpful to have a timer available so you can program it to your own guidelines for times for each set of acupressure points and poses.

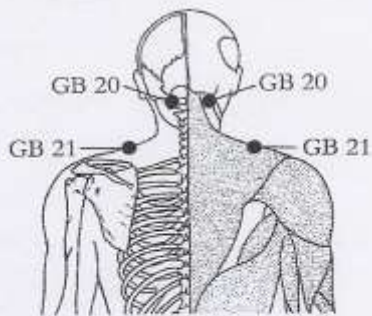


Sea of Tranquility (CV 17): Hold this point (in the indentation in the center of your breastbone) when you feel frustrated, irritated or tense. Holding this emotional balancing point releases uptightness in the chest and enables deep breathing. Hold for three minutes as you breathe slowly and deeply for an instant calming effect whenever you feel agitated or under stress.

Third Eye Point (GV 24.5): Use this point to transform negative emotions during stressful times. Close your eyes, gently place middle fingertip between eyebrows. Breathe slowly and deeply for three minutes to collect your thoughts and rejuvenate yourself.

Self-Care Routine for Stress

This acupressure routine releases shoulder and neck tension and can transform stress into a sense of well-being.



Step 1

Shoulder Grasp: Curve your fingers of both hands and place them on the tops of your shoulder muscles (GB 21) close to the back of the neck. Gradually apply firm pressure directly on to your shoulder tension. Simply let the weight of your arms relax forward, keeping your fingers curved like a hook. Sink deeply into the muscles as they soften and relax. Hold for one minute as you take slow, deep breaths. Let your hands relax in your lap. Gently shrug your shoulders up and down several times to encourage them to relax more.

Step 2:

Neck Press: Interlace your fingers behind your neck and let your head hang forward with your elbows close together pointing down toward your lap. Inhale deeply raising your head as you stretch your elbows out to the sides; let your head tilt back. Exhale as your head relaxes forward and your elbows come close together in front of you. Repeat this exercise for two minutes then let your hands float back into your lap. Keeping your eyes closed, take another minute to let yourself relax deeply.

Step 3:

GB 20: Close your eyes, place your thumbs on GB20 (underneath the base of your skull in the indentations that lie about three inches apart). Apply firm pressure for one minute.

**Step 4:**

Press St 6: Place your fingertips on the jaw muscles to firmly press St 6. You should feel a muscle pop out when you clench your molars together. Hold these points firmly on the jaw muscle with your teeth slightly apart, breathing deeply for one minute. End with 30 seconds of light pressure as you continue breathing deeply.

**Step 5:**

Touch GV 24.5 with CV 17: Gently place your right middle fingertip on GV 24.5 (in between your eyebrows, in the indentation where the bridge of your nose meets your forehead). Position the fingertips of your left hand on CV 17 (in the indentation of your breastbone at the level of your heart). Close your eyes as you hold these points and breathe deeply for at least one minute.

Yoga Strategies to Stress Less

Stress takes its toll mentally and physically. Yoga's mind-body approach can reduce its impact.

Try this routine daily for help with managing stress. Try to hold each pose starting for 30 – 40 seconds and build up to 2-5 minutes as you can.

Start by taking a peaceful pause, sit comfortably with your eyes closed and focus on your breathing. Establish a count of: five-count inhale, seven count exhale and three count pause. Take a minimum of 10 breaths in this manner trying to build up to four sets of 10 breaths. Start in this position:



Do each of the following poses – holding from 30 seconds and building up to 2 – 5 minutes each.





End the routine with the following pose by lying down comfortably with a bolster or pillow under your legs and set a timer for a desired length of time – 8 to 10 minutes. Close your eyes; notice your breathing and sense the release and comfort in your legs as they are resting on the bolster or pillow. Simply be in your body in your relaxed posture.



Doing this routine daily or 3-4 times a week will help reduce the stress in your mind and body.

Nutritional Guides for Stress Depletion

L-trosine as needed for thyroid and stress support

Minerals – magnesium, zinc and potassium to help calm the brain and body

B vitamins to assist hormonal and neurotransmitter support

Adrenal gland support- Herbal supplements such Ashwagandha or Indian Ginseng provide support for the stress response

Chronic stress depletes the body of thyroid, estrogen and progesterone, all of which interact with brain signals. It shuts down digestion and reduces the gut's production of serotonin. It is important to counteract this response through good nutrition and calming our body and mind through exercise, healthy, whole foods and good sleeping patterns.

Here is a list of foods that help with balancing stress nutritionally:

1. Oysters

Research has correlated an imbalance of zinc to copper with anxiety. This trace mineral ratio is responsible for proper neurotransmitter function and adaptation to stress. Increased copper and decreased zinc may lead to symptoms of anxiety and stress.

Oysters are packed with zinc! This superfood of the sea is a great way to balance the proper trace mineral ratio and your stress levels. It's also important to note that foods like grains and legumes contain phytic acid, an anti-nutrient that can bind to zinc and block its absorption.

2. Chamomile Tea

Sip on this natural anti-anxiety medicine for its natural calming effect. This soothing, mild tea was shown to significantly decrease anxiety symptoms in just a few weeks!

3. Rooibos Tea

Rooibos, or African red bush tea, is a delicious way to bring a natural calm to your day. Researchers are looking into its effect on cortisol. It seems to work by having a balancing effect on the body's main stress hormone.

4. Full-Fat Kefir

In functional medicine, the gut is considered the "second brain" because it's home to 95% of your "feel good" hormone serotonin. With more than 100 million neurons, your gut's health is essential to manage anxiety.

Bacterial imbalances in your gut can alter brain chemistry, and kefir, an ancient fermented dairy drink, might just be the most powerful probiotic ever! It also has fat soluble vitamins A, D and K2, all important for brain health.

5. Turkey

You know that tired feeling people feel after Thanksgiving dinner? It's actually from the tryptophan in the turkey. Tryptophan is a precursor to the neurotransmitter serotonin, which helps you to feel calm. Tryptophan in the form of meat, has been shown to reduce anxiety disorders!

6. Turmeric

Curcuminoids, the antioxidants in turmeric, have a neuroprotective quality and help enhance your mood. It was shown in a randomized controlled trial to be an effective option for major depressive disorder, which is closely linked to anxiety disorders.

7. Organ Meats

If you eat meat, organ meats are some of the best sources of nutrients needed to beat anxiety, like zinc and vitamin D. They also contain copious amounts of choline, needed for the synthesis of the neurotransmitter acetylcholine. Liver is also abundant in B vitamins, which are needed for methylation, a metabolic process in the body that is responsible for proper synthesis of neurotransmitters that regulate mood.

8. Avocados

This superfruit is great for brain health and anxiety. They contain potassium which helps naturally lower blood pressure. Avocados also contain beneficial B vitamins and monounsaturated fats that are needed for neurotransmitter and brain health.

9. Dark Chocolate

Science has vindicated chocolate lovers everywhere. A randomized, placebo-controlled trial published in the *Journal of Psychopharmacology* revealed that people who drank a dark chocolate drink, equal to about 1.5 ounces of dark chocolate per day, felt calmer than those who did not.

10. Asparagus

This sulfur-rich vegetable also contains the specifically beneficial B vitamin, folic acid. Low levels of folic acid are linked to neurotransmitter impairment, which can lead to anxiety. A 5.3-ounce serving provides 60% of the recommended daily allowance for folic acid! It also contains moderate amounts of potassium, which can lower blood pressure.

11. Adaptogenic Herbs

One common hormonal signaling pathway dysfunction in patients struggling with anxiety disorders is the brain-adrenal axis. The hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal (HPA) axis is part of your sympathetic "flight-or-fight " response and something, and can play a role in adrenal fatigue. Stress hormones, like cortisol, can cause serotonin receptors to become less sensitive to activation. Adaptogenic herbs like ashwagandha, rhodiola and holy basil are useful to optimize brain-adrenal function.

12. Leafy Greens

If you struggle with stress and anxiety increase the greens! Plant foods like Swiss chard and spinach are rich in magnesium, the natural "chill pill," which also helps regulate the brain-adrenal axis.

13. Fatty Meat

Inflammation is one factor when it comes to brain health and anxiety. Omega-3 fats have been shown to decrease anxiety. Omega-rich foods like Alaskan salmon and grass-fed beef can help decrease inflammation and help cortisol and adrenaline from spiking.

Reset Your Health – Reset Your Life

Action Steps for Adrenal Support

1. Get Tested

Salivary Cortisol Test – you can request through your health care practitioner or order test kit online. Test results will show:

- Normal (yeah!)
- Stressed (cortisol always or sometimes high, never low)
- Wired and Tired (cortisol both high and low)
- Crashed (cortisol never high, sometimes low)

Blood Tests

- AM Fasting Cortisol
- ACTH (Adrenocorticotrophic hormone – helps rule out adrenal disease)
- Adrenal Antibodies
- Dhea-S
- Chem panel with electrolytes

Talk with your health care practitioner about results or seek out a professional that can help with interpretation of the results.

2. Diet

- Log meals for 90 days

Nutritional targets for adrenal health:

- Fiber: over 35 grams daily
- Sugar: under 20 grams daily
- Protein: 30% of calories
- Fats: 25-35% of calories
- Saturated fat: under 25 grams daily

Foods to Avoid:

- Long term –
 - Sugar
 - Wheat
 - Unfermented soy
- First 90 days
 - Dairy
 - Eggs

Carb cycling (beans, ancient grains, starch veggies)

- Breakfast Shake – high in resistant starch (beans, bananas)
- Lunch ½ cup
- Dinner ¾ cup

Incorporate the foods listed above into your daily diet to counteract the depletion of these nutrients that happens when we are under stress.

3. Detox

Daily pre-tox

- No shoes in home
- Natural cleaning agents
- Off gas dry cleaning
- Leave car windows open in garage
- Pure water

Daily detox

- 2 servings of green vegetables
- 10 drops of chlorophyll to AM shake
- 1 tbsp rice bran fiber to AM shake

Targeted detox

- Detox program
- Veggie snacks
- Avoid –
 - Sugar
 - Alcohol
 - Caffeine
 - Processed foods

4. Develop a daily routine using the materials in this guide. Give yourself some alone time to incorporate this routine into your daily life. You will reap the benefits over and over from taking this time to yourself. We cannot avoid stress; we can help our bodies overcome the effects that stress has on our body and help to decrease the possibilities of having health issues because of it.

For more help with a detox program or stress and its affects on the body, contact Lisa at:

www.womensintegrativehealthny.com