

STRESS CONTROL

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Visit the **Mayo Clinic**: <http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/relaxation-technique/SR00007>

Acute – *Quick onset ... it has only occurred recently.*

Use either the “4 Step” or “7 Step Approach”:

1. **STOP** - before you are consumed by the worst thoughts;
 2. **VISUALIZE** - close your eyes, think of a pleasant scene & see yourself there (10 to 20 secs);
 3. **BREATHE** – “The Cool Down” ... take 2-3 deep, slow breaths (10 to 20 secs); then ...
 4. **QUICK RELAXATION** – use one of the *Quick Stress Reducers* below;
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5. **IDENTIFY ALL YOUR STRESSORS** - write them down;
 6. **PRIORITIZE** - ID the MAJOR STRESSOR & highlight it, then rank the rest;
 7. **PROBLEM SOLVE** - find & implement solutions to the MAJOR stressor.

Quick Stress Reducers

- a) **Relaxation Response** : Breathe, use a mantra (eg: “calmm”, “tenn”), “The Face & Shoulder Sag”, Kinesthetic Cues (eg: hand position; a rubbing object; “The Finger Facial”); meditation, etc.
- b) **Laugh** : Belly laugh at some jokes, a comedy movie, a comic, or at nothing at all.
- c) **Scream** : Scream or bellow as loud as you can 3 times.
- c) **Smile at & Compliment** a few people (co-workers, family members, & even strangers).
- d) **Positive Self-Talk** : “I am becoming more & more calm & relaxed”, or
“I am coping better & better with this each day”.
- e) **Change the Channel** :... Imagine that all negative or stressful thoughts are coming from a radio or TV, and change the channel to one with positive stories.
- f) **Distractors** : Take a 10 min break & use a punch bag; “Stretch & Strain”; go for a jog or a brief, brisk walk; do some juggling; read a book.
- g) **Avoidance Technique** :.. “The Walk Away”;
- h) **Breathing Strategies** :... “The Cool Down”(3 deep breaths), “The Breathe Technique”(look away while talking), “The Hesitation”(one breath at start), “Pulse Breathing”.
- i) **Success** : Finish one job, or... break it into chunks & complete it chunk by chunk.
- j) **Prioritize** : (i) Write down all your jobs to do; (ii) Start the most important one now!

Chronic – *Slow Onset ... ie: it has been building up over months or years.*

*Use the Acute techniques above ... but also do Nos 1 & 2 below,
& definitely also select some strategies from No 3 (Lifestyle changes):*

1. **See your Doctor** ... & ask about HRT, diet, lifestyle, medication, counselling, acupuncture, hypnosis, goal setting, etc.
2. **Use a Counsellor, Psychotherapist, Psychologist or Hypnotist** for guidance & motivation in reducing or coping with stress.
3. **Make Lifestyle changes:**
 - **Identify them, then make a Plan to solve your major Stressors;**
 - **Take Responsibility for Your Stress** – & even if you are not to blame, **do not blame others;**
 - **Get Organised** – most people are poorly organized, so look at what you do daily, weekly, monthly, etc, then prioritize & set task time limits;
 - ❖ **Start Goal Setting;**
 - ❖ **Reduce your Commitments** – learn to say “No!”;
 - ❖ **Schedule “daily down time”** – (a) for things like reading, writing, gardening, music; and (b) for 10 to 60 minutes quiet meditation / relaxation;
 - ❖ **Money** – organize your finances; use a budget; have a savings & investment plan;
 - ❖ **Use Professionals** –Life Coach, Financial Advisor, Business Coach, Accountant; ... / 2

- Learn & use **Mindfulness** daily! – close your eyes &...“Pulse Breathe”, **or** see colours & shapes inside eyelids, **or** listen for external sounds, **Then...** accept how you feel but change how you react.
- **Take Holidays** – at least 6 per year (3x single days; 2x weekends; & 1x week);
- **Walk by the Water** (river, dam, creek, beach) .. or take **A Walk in a Park or the Bush** weekly, or daily if you can.
- **Get regular Physical Exercise daily** – swim, cycle, walk to work or the store; park a block from the shops and walk the rest of the way; use the stairs; hire a Personal Trainer; join a gym;
- **Alter your Diet** – variety & moderation are the keys & get some advice. A few tips ...
 - (a) reduce coffee, tea, & alcohol intake, and avoid all cigarettes and illicit drugs;
 - (b) decrease fat, salt & sugar, and increase vegetables & other unprocessed foods;
 - (c) eat less, but eat 3 healthy meals daily;
 - (d) don't snack! Drink water instead.
- **Get Social** – go dancing or bushwalking, join a squash or bowling league; play chess, join a service club (Rotary, Lions, Zonta, Quota, etc.);
- **Volunteer** – Meals On Wheels; coach a junior team; help the Red Cross or the local hospital;
- **Make a Major Change** – to your **Job**, &/or **House** &/or **City** &/or **Partner** &/or **Friends**.
- **Make Laughter & Smiles part of your life** – watch a humorous movie weekly; belly laugh & read jokes daily; smile at a stranger every day; join a Laughter Club;
- **Change your Daily Routine** – do things at different times & in a different order; &/or do one thing daily that you would not normally do;
- **Develop a new Hobby (or make time for your favourite one)** - stamp collecting, crafts, chess, woodworking, fishing, painting, lapidary;
- **Pay attention to your Feelings** & act upon them;
- **Revive or begin a Relationship** – use relationship counselling; start courting again; join clubs; use introduction agencies / internet;

4. **Longer Term Relaxation Techniques:**

- **Kinesthetic Cues** as a stress busting conditioned reflex – use a rubbing a object; intertwine fingers; squeeze the web between thumb & first finger; “Finger Facial”;
- **Autogenic Training** – sit or lie comfortably with eyes closed and say, “*My head, neck & shoulders are relaxed*” at least 20 times. Also stick blue dots everywhere (on mirror, fridge, watch, clock, cupboard, kettle, computer, etc.) and every time you see a blue dot, say to yourself as you breathe out: “*My head, neck & shoulders are relaxed*”;
- **“Body Muscle Melt”** – Starting at the feet, contract & relax muscle groups up to your head;
- **Self-Hypnosis** – use the power of your subconscious to de-stress & relax, or even to help with some of the lifestyle changes above;
- **Join a Meditation/Relaxation group** – Yoga, T'ai Chi;
- **“The Descending Staircase”**- relax more with every step as you descend to a beach or forest.

5. **Or try some Alternative Therapies** (... but only if you are so inclined):

- (a) **Colour Therapy** – think blue sea, or green forest;
- (b) **Reflexology** – a form of foot massage combined with acupressure;
- (c) **Naturopathy** – uses natural substances (herbs, etc.) to treat conditions;
- (d) **Acupressure (Shiatsu)** – try pressing or gently massaging with your thumb or a finger tip for at least 10 seconds, the spot between your eyebrows and/or your temples;
- (e) **Sound Therapy** – also termed Audio-Psycho-Phonology, it supposedly helps with stress, insomnia, concentration, etc... **or** just listen to some soothing music, not Rock or Metal;
- (f) **Homeopathy** – uses extremely dilute substances to treat problems;
- (g) **Aromatherapy** – this is the use of aromatic essential oils to influence recovery;
- (h) **Hydrotherapy** – uses water for stress relief.