



Got Stress? Here Are 3 Helpful Tips

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Below is a good starting point for anyone wishing to release stress and improve his/her overall quality of life. As always, see what works within your personal lifestyle and belief system, and always check with your health care professionals regarding anything that might affect your health and well-being. There are many, many techniques and strategies to reduce stress and you can find many more on my website at www.relaxintuit.com

1. Practice Mindfulness in Everyday Activities

The truth is that about 99% of all the stress we experience is related to either past events that have already occurred, or future worries about events that may never come to pass. The practice of Mindfulness is the fundamental principle of meditation. Bringing awareness and focus into the present moment instantly replaces yesterday's regrets, and releases worries for tomorrow. It allows us to be fully present to experience *this* conversation, *this* breath, *this* pleasure, or to solve *this* problem. Within each of us, there is a quiet place where peace lives. In day-to-day life, no matter the enormity of the challenges we face, presence of mind allows calm, gentle release of worry, anger or grief, allowing us to take constructive action if necessary, or refrain from any action if that is what's best. Mindfulness allows the body-mind to pause, and rebalance in the open space of the quiet place inside. In addition to traditional Zen practice or Transcendental Meditation (TM), many also find great comfort in guided imagery meditation, movement, writing or walking meditations. Anything that holds our focus and keeps us in this moment can be calming. The rhythm of the ocean, washing dishes, rocking a baby, artwork or even rebuilding an engine, can be mindful, meditative experiences.

2. Stress Happens, so Eat, Breathe and Be Merry!

Make conscious food choices, and then savor them. There is a special joy in eating foods that we know are both healthy and delicious. Consider the roles of caffeine, sugar and alcohol in your life. Each can exacerbate stress in some people, and "sugar blues" is often confused with an ailment commonly referred to as "crabbiness." Slow, mindful breathing deep into the belly, drinking plenty of water, and daily moderate, pleasurable movement all enhance delivery of nutrients, circulation, and support all of our vital functions. Deep, purposeful "belly-breathing" oxygenates the body and deep, blissful "belly-laughing" nourishes the rest! Smiling sends a signal throughout our systems that all is well: *"I must be okay-- I'm smiling!"* Remember that a sense of adventure and of play, healthy, enjoying honest relationships, gentle touch and creative expression in whatever forms, all help us to balance our lives. These make the inevitable stress that is part of every day somehow pale by comparison to all the pleasure we find.

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3 Top Tips

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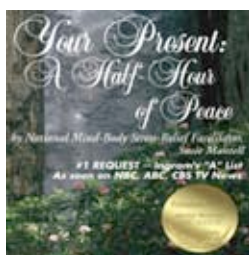
3. Above All, Hope.

Hope has great power. It is what carries us through the most difficult and frightening moments of our lives. I have personally witnessed extraordinary healing that had seemed, at best, highly unlikely. Most of us never really slow down to take inventory of where we have been so far, where we are today, and who we would like to become. First, give yourself permission to imagine the person you would like to be. For some, that will look dramatically different from the life they are living today, and for others it will not be such a far reach. Take some time to create a wish list. You might prefer journaling your heart's desires, or perhaps even painting images of them or creating a collage of magazine cutout. The clearer we are when imagining our aspirations and intentions, the sooner we can begin to take small steps to bring them closer. Talk your hopes through with trusted friends who will

- a) ...listen without judgment.
- b) ...wish them for you too.

Where there is life, there is always hope. On one hand, it's fine to be somewhat realistic as we wish, but sometimes, we have no way of knowing what is actually possible, so it's a good idea not to put too many limitations on the things for which we hope. If we are very lucky, work toward our goals, and hope very hard, we just might see ourselves make some remarkable changes over time and... wouldn't that be wonderful?

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END OF THIS TIP##