



Stress Tips Toolbox: All "Stressed-Up" ... and No Place to Go? by award-winning author and stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

When It Comes to Stress-Relief Techniques, One Size Does Not Fit All.

We each need to develop a variety of realistic, personal stress-management tools that works within our personal lifestyles, preferences and belief systems.

Include:

- Lots of laughter and smiles throughout each day
- Some form of creative expression
- Healthy nutrition
- Pleasurable, moderate exercise and stretching
- Mindful breathing
- Time outdoors
- Time with people who love you
- Soothing touch
- A clear conscience
- Mindfulness and meditation in everyday life

Here Are 3 of Susie's Simple Soothers to Start Your Toolbox:

1. Tense Tummy?

Release Your Middle: Softly closing your eyes, exhale old, stale air from your lungs. Now place your hand below your navel and inhale slowly through your nose, feeling your belly expand. On the out-breath, imagine exhaling through your ribcage all the way around. Now inhale...this time imagine exhaling through the low back. Deep, purposeful belly-breathing oxygenates the blood, helps you focus and sends a calming signal, diminishing stress so you can breathe easy.

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2. Juggling and Struggling?

Stress Is No Laughing Matter (or *is* it?): A case of the giggles reminds us who we are inside when we've been acting grown up for just a little too long! Slinky...Silly Putty... Hula Hoop...Remember those? Go pick wildflowers. Rent silly movies. Color. Play! A positive outlook and a sense of adventure, physical activity, supportive relationships and spontaneous laughter all boost endorphins, increasing the "feel-good" factor, and supporting optimal wellness of the body, mind and soul.

3. Only Have 5 Minutes? *R-e-l-a-x* Fast!

First, clench your whole, entire body: fists, abs, jaw, cheeks, (all four of them.) Squeeze your shoulders up to your ears, curl your toes then stretch them. Slowly release one muscle at a time. Imagine inhaling peace, confidence, joy...exhaling worry, stress and tension. Lather, rinse, repeat!

Bonus Tip:

Gentle touch, honest relationships and some form of personally meaningful spiritual practice can all help balance tough days with something comforting, just for you.

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