

16 Simple Ways to Relieve Stress and Anxiety

Stress and anxiety are common experiences for most people. In fact, 70% of adults in the US say they feel stress or anxiety daily.

Here are 16 simple ways to relieve stress and anxiety.

1. Exercise

Exercise is one of the most important things you can do to combat stress. It might seem contradictory, but putting physical stress on your body through exercise can help relieve mental stress. The benefits are strongest when you exercise regularly. People who exercise regularly are less likely to experience anxiety than those who don't exercise.

There are a few reasons behind this:

- **Stress hormones:** Exercise lowers your body's stress hormones in the long run, such as cortisol. It also helps release endorphins, which are chemicals that improve your mood and act as natural painkillers.
- **Sleep:** Exercise can also [improve your sleep quality](#), which can be negatively affected by stress and anxiety.
- **Confidence:** When you exercise regularly, you may feel more competent and confident in your body, which in turn promotes mental well-being.

Try to find an activity you enjoy, such as walking, dancing, rock climbing or yoga. Activities that use repetitive movements of large muscle groups, such as walking or jogging, can be particularly stress relieving.

2. Consider Supplements

Several supplements are used to reduce stress and anxiety. Vitamin supplements have proven to strengthen the body's immune system as well as lower the symptoms related to stress. By providing our bodies with the building blocks it has the tools to combat the effects of stress. Start by taking a good multi-vitamin and drinking plenty of water. Be sure to talk with your doctor before starting any new regimen.

3. Light a Candle

Using essential oils or burning a scented candle may help reduce your feelings of stress and anxiety.

Some scents are especially soothing. Here are some of the most calming scents:

- Lavender.
- Rose.
- Vetiver.
- Bergamot.
- Roman chamomile.
- Neroli.
- Frankincense.
- Sandalwood.
- Ylang ylang.
- Orange or orange blossom.
- Geranium.

Using scents to treat your mood is called aromatherapy. Several studies show that aromatherapy can decrease anxiety and improve sleep.

4. Reduce Your Caffeine Intake

Caffeine is a stimulant found in coffee, tea, chocolate and energy drinks. High doses can increase anxiety. People have different thresholds for how much caffeine they can tolerate. If you notice that caffeine makes you jittery or anxious, consider cutting back.

5. Write It Down

One way to handle stress is to write things down. While writing down what you're stressed about is one approach, another is writing down what you're grateful for. Gratitude may help relieve stress and anxiety by focusing your thoughts on what's positive in your life. Keeping a journal can help relieve stress and anxiety, especially if you focus on the positive.

6. Chew Gum

For a super easy and quick stress reliever, try chewing a stick of gum. One study showed that people who chewed gum had a greater sense of well-being and lower stress. There are a couple possible reasons for this. One theory is that chewing gum causes brain waves similar to those of relaxed people. Another is that chewing gum promotes blood flow to the brain. Additionally, one recent study found that stress relief was greatest when people chewed more strongly.

7. Spend Time With Friends and Family

Social support from friends and family can help you get through stressful times. Being part of a friend network gives you a sense of belonging and self-worth, which can help you in tough times. One study found that for women, in particular, spending time with friends and children helps release oxytocin, a natural stress reliever. This effect is called "tend and befriend," and is the opposite of the fight-or-flight response. Furthermore, both men and women benefit from friendship. Another study found that men and women with the fewest social connections were more likely to suffer from depression and anxiety.

8. Laugh

It's hard to feel anxious when you're laughing. It's good for your health, and there are a few ways it may help relieve stress:

- Brings more oxygen into your body and organs.
- Stimulates and relieves your stress response.
- Relieves tension by relaxing your muscles.

In the long term, laughter can also help improve your immune system and mood. A study among people with cancer found that people in the laughter intervention group experienced more stress relief than those who were simply distracted. Watch a funny TV show, hang out with friends who make you laugh and even find humor in your troubles.

9. Learn to Say No

Not all stressors are within your control, but some are. Take control over the parts of your life that you can change and are causing you stress. **One way to do this may be to say "no" more often.** This is especially true if you find yourself taking on more than you can handle, as juggling many responsibilities can leave you feeling overwhelmed. Being selective about what you take on — and saying no to what will unnecessarily add to your load — can be a good start to controlling your stress levels.

10. Learn to Avoid Procrastination

Another way to take control of your stress is to stay on top of your priorities and stop procrastinating. Procrastination can lead you to act reactively, meaning you're scrambling to catch up. This can cause stress, which negatively affects your health and sleep quality. Get in the habit of making a to-do list that's organized by priority. Give yourself realistic deadlines and work your way down the list. Work on the things that need to get done today and give yourself chunks of uninterrupted time, as switching between tasks (multi-tasking) can be stressful itself.

11. Take a Yoga Class

Yoga has become a popular method of stress relief and exercise among all age groups. While yoga styles differ, most share a common goal — to join your body and mind. Yoga primarily does this by increasing body and breath awareness. Some studies have looked at yoga's effect on mental health. Overall, they have found that yoga can enhance mood and may even be as effective as antidepressant drugs at treating depression and anxiety.

12. Practice Mindfulness

Mindfulness describes practices that anchor you to the present moment. It can help combat the anxiety-inducing effects of negative thinking. There are several methods for increasing mindfulness, including mindfulness-based cognitive therapy, mindfulness-based stress reduction, yoga and meditation. A recent study in college students suggested that mindfulness may help increase self-esteem, which in turn lessens symptoms of anxiety and depression.

13. Cuddle

Cuddling, kissing, hugging and sex can all help relieve stress. Positive physical contact can help release oxytocin and lower cortisol. This can help lower blood pressure and heart rate, both of which are physical symptoms of stress. Positive touch from cuddling, hugging, kissing and sex may help lower stress by releasing oxytocin and lowering blood pressure.

14. Listen to Soothing Music

Listening to music can have a very relaxing effect on the body. Slow-paced instrumental music can induce the relaxation response by helping lower blood pressure and heart rate, as well as stress hormones. Some types of classical, Celtic, Native American and Indian music can be particularly soothing, but simply listening to the music you enjoy is effective too. Nature sounds can also be very calming. This is why they're often incorporated into relaxation and meditation music.

15. Deep Breathing

Mental stress activates your sympathetic nervous system, signaling your body to go into "fight-or-flight" mode. During this reaction, stress hormones are released and you experience the physical symptoms of stress — your heart beats faster, you breathe quicker and your blood vessels constrict. Deep breathing exercises can help activate your parasympathetic nervous system, which controls the relaxation response.

There are several types of deep breathing exercises, including diaphragmatic breathing, abdominal breathing, belly breathing and paced respiration. The goal of deep breathing is to focus your awareness on your breath, making it slower and deeper. When you breathe in deeply through your nose, your lungs fully expand and your belly rises. This helps your heart rate slow down, allowing you to feel more peaceful.

16. Spend Time with Your Pet

Having a pet may help reduce stress and improve your mood. According to one study, dog owners reported lower levels of stress than non-dog owners. Interacting with pets may help release oxytocin, a brain chemical that promotes a positive mood. Having a pet may also help relieve stress by giving you purpose, keeping you active and providing companionship — all qualities that help reduce anxiety.