

14 Simple Ways to Eliminate Stress

by Zoë Saint-Paul, Life Coach

Dear Friend,

You have it. I have it. Everyone has it...

No matter how different our lives might be, we all face the same challenge: How do we manage our stress?

Stress comes in many forms and for many reasons. There's the stress from good and happy things: marriage, a new baby, getting ready for vacation, going back to school. And then there's the stress that comes from hardship: death of a loved one, job loss, marital problems, illness, financial woes, moving. The list goes on.

And of course, there's the regular, day-to-day stresses that leave us feeling overwhelmed, tired and scattered. In a few of my recent letters to you, I gave you some ideas that would help with stress reduction -- finding sacred space in your life and clearing out the clutter in your home. If you missed these, drop me an email and I'll get them to you.

But because stress is such a pervasive problem, I wanted to send along some additional tips that I share with clients when they complain about being stressed out. None of them are that revolutionary... but they do work. And that's what counts.

Before I get to the list, I have a quick suggestion: Pour yourself a cup of herbal tea or a glass of red wine, and then come back and keep reading. That will help put you in the right frame of mind to read about relaxation.

Oh, and don't forget to send me any ideas you have for de-stressing. I'm always happy to hear about your own successes!

Now, on to the list...

#1 Do less.

Examine your life. Are you doing too much? Is there anything you can let go of... activities, commitments, plans, tasks? Eliminating these kinds of things can be difficult, I know. This is especially the case for women, because we're often trying to be all things to all people.

Nevertheless, look at your life to see if there's anything you can drop. Even if it's just one thing, it'll lighten your load.

#2 Eat well.

Yes, you already know this. Still, it helps to be reminded that food plays a huge role in helping us handle stress. Here are a few general rules:

- A. A. Eat 3-4 meals per day of nutritious foods.
- B. B. Avoid sugars and processed food, increase your vegetables, fruit and fish.
- C. C. Eat whole grain, low saturated fat, and chemical free meat and poultry.
- D. D. Choose healthy snacks. Cut down on caffeine and don't forget lots of good quality water!

#3 Move your body.

Exercise 3-4 times per week for 20-30 minutes, and get your heart rate up. This could be a brisk walk, aerobics, a run around the neighborhood, a bike ride, a stationary machine at home, yoga classes. And don't forget about stretching... it gets the blood circulating and sends oxygen to the cells. Exercise will do wonders for your anxiety and stress.

#4 Supplement.

Vitamins make a big difference -- they support our bodies and immune systems when we're under stress. A whole food vitamin is best because it's actually made from real food, so you're able to assimilate more of it. There are a number of good brands out there and the best vitamins are never cheap. (The cheap ones don't get absorbed well, so what's the point?) One brand I recommend is called New Chapter.

Note: The B vitamins are especially important for decreasing stress and anxiety.

#5 Breathe.

When you get stressed and anxious, your breath becomes short, rapid and erratic. Next time you feel particularly stressed, stop for a minute and breathe deeply. Take deep breathes of air in through your nose and out through your mouth for a few minutes, concentrating on your breath and taking the air all the way into your diaphragm (imagine it's going down into the pit of your stomach).

Do this whenever you have an acutely stressful moment. You'll soon notice your heart rate slowing down and your mind regaining its focus.

#6 Keep a consistent bedtime routine.

As much as possible, sleep at regular times each night -- going to bed and rising at the same time. Not only will quality sleep help with your stress, but so does keeping a regular sleep schedule. Give yourself at least one hour to wind down before bedtime -- longer if possible. This will help your mind and body get ready for sleep. (It will know what to do on its own... you just have to give it a chance.)

Note: If you're the mother of a young child, you're excused from this. I know that the unpredictable nature of a little one makes it all but impossible to keep a regular nighttime routine.

#7 Take a bath.

A warm bath will relax your muscles and slow your breathing. For extra relaxation, add Epsom salts or essential oils. You may also want to light a candle... that really creates a soothing space.

#8 Try aromatherapy.

The sense of smell is powerful and triggers numerous brain reactions. There are several essential oils that when heated or placed in a bath or shower, will just about knock you out.

Here are some powerful ones: cedarwood, lavender, tangerine, patchouli, jasmine, rose, bergamot.

Note: Be sure to get good quality oils... While they're more expensive, you'll only need a couple of small drops. You can buy an inexpensive oil dispenser at most health food stores. Or, if that's not possible, you can boil some water in a small pot, then place a few drops in the water. Set the pot on a heat-proof surface and let the scent fill the room.

#9 Keep a schedule.

A daily schedule will reduce your stress because it helps you stay in the present moment. You don't have to worry about what's coming next because you have it written down. Review your schedule each morning and check off appointments and tasks. If you hate the idea of a schedule book then create a to-do list on a pad of paper.

#10 Take at least 10 minutes a day of quiet time.

I mentioned this in my e-Report, "7 Secrets to Improve Your Life Immediately," but it's an important one.

Take the time -- morning, noon or night -- for a quiet period. Pray, reflect, or just sit in silence. You can do this in any place you find peaceful. Focus on breathing and try to empty your mind of distractions. If you can't stop racing thoughts, focus on one thought, idea or image that you find relaxing.

#11 Have a sip of tea.

Chamomile tea is known for its relaxing properties and ginger tea quiets the stomach and reduces nausea. There are other soothing teas, as well. A non-caffeinated herbal tea can be a nice ritual before bedtime.

#12 Talk it out.

Share your worries, concerns, fears and problems with others -- close friends, a spouse, a family member, a counselor or coach. You really don't want things to get bottled up. Stress has a nasty way of sitting in your subconscious mind. Expressing it will help to diffuse it.

#13 Reach out and touch someone.

The human touch soothes. You may already be an affectionate person but if you're not, try it! Hug your family and friends a bit more often, or hold your significant other's hand. If you're single, try getting a regular massage or reflexology.

#14 Do something creative.

Particularly with your hands. It's funny, but activities like painting, drawing, planting flowers, knitting, and stringing beads all have a way of calming us down. The act of using your hands is therapeutic and these activities will put your mind in a restorative and relaxing state.

That's the list. There are several other ideas but I don't want to overwhelm you right now. For the time being, try a couple of these tips. You'll be very happy with the result.

And now, your word for this week is:

panacea (pan-uh-SEE-uh), noun: a remedy for all ills or difficulties; a cure-all

For example: A good night's sleep is a powerful panacea.

Have a restful weekend and I'll talk to you soon,

Zoe

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