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5 Ways to Manage Your Stress

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By Dr. Melissa Carr, B.Sc., Dr.TCM • June 5th, 2013 • 1046 Views



You wake up to your alarm clock and realize that you must have hit snooze a few times. Running late, you rush to get ready, then head to work. Traffic, of course, slows you further, and when you arrive at work, the fun continues. Your desk is piled high with papers, your email inbox is overflowing, and everything seems due today. You take time away from your desk only to refill your giant coffee cup, the one thing that seems to keep your head from crashing with exhaustion to your desk.

Most of us know [stress](#). We know it as fatigue, racing heartbeat, and poor sleep. Did you also know that it can weaken your immune system, suppress your digestive system, impair hormone balance, alter your thinking, and slow your healing?

Imagine if you could avoid these negative health impacts, despite your daily stresses. It is possible, and it needn't be complicated.

- Breathe.** Slow, focused, deep [breathing](#) sends calming signals to the brain. It is best, however, to practice this breathing regularly so that you are better prepared when a stressful situation arises.
- Exercise.** Exercise helps because it releases feel-good hormones called endorphins. Some types of exercise, like yoga and [tai chi](#), also work on focused breathing. Exercise also strengthens your heart, to help reduce some of the negative effects that stress has on it.
- Laugh.** Laughter helps to relax tight muscles, bringing more oxygen into your system and lowering blood pressure. If you don't have a funny book, movie, or friend nearby - try forcing a fake laugh; sometimes that will get you started.
- Get Some Nature.** Enjoying some time with [nature](#) - whether on a mountain, at the beach, or in a forest - can help you wind down. In Tokyo, they call it "forest-bathing," and it can increase your parasympathetic nerve activity by 55 percent; this is the state of relaxation.
- Try Traditional Chinese Medicine.** Like exercise, acupuncture releases feel-good endorphin hormones. [Chinese](#) herbs like Siberian ginseng, [goji berries](#), and schisandra berries have been shown to be adaptogenic; meaning that they can help the body adapt to changes and stressors. Both also help to address health issues that might aggravate, or be aggravated by, stress.

So, plan ahead, pick your stress management methods, and discover that stress doesn't need to get the better of you.

Dr. Melissa Carr is a registered Doctor of Traditional...

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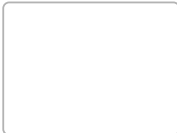
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