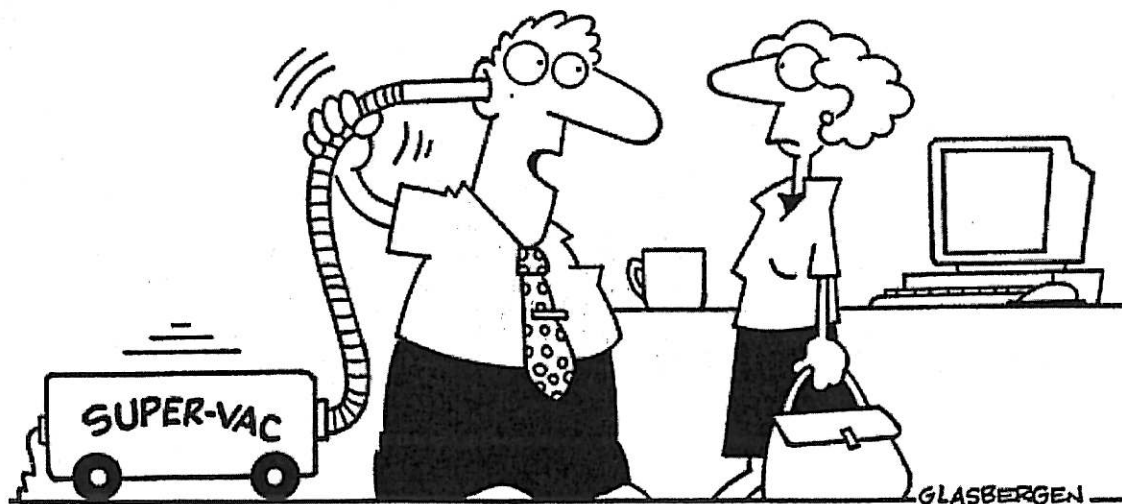


STRESS MANAGEMENT

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**"It's just something I do every day at 5:00
to get rid of stress before I go home."**

Strategies and Techniques

STRESS MANAGEMENT IN A NUTSHELL

BREATHE: Inhale deeply, exhale completely

MOVE: Get physical, dance, walk, stretch, jump, swim, play ball

PLAY: Laugh, relax, enjoy, and commune with others

**EAT A HEALTHY, WELL
BALANCED DIET**

SLEEP: 7-8 hours a night

**CONTROL ONLY THOSE THINGS
WHICH ARE YOURS TO
CONTROL**

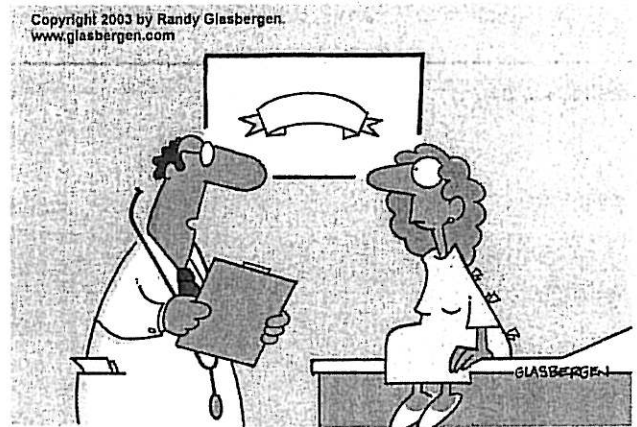
CHOOSE YOUR BATTLES WISELY

AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, BE FULLY PRESENT IN THE

MOMENT: Many perfectly good moments are lost because our thoughts are wandering backward or forward in time. The past is gone and the future as we may imagine or wish it to be, may never arrive. At any given moment, the present moment is all that we have with certainty. Make a conscious effort to enjoy this moment as if it were your last.

**AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, BE ON GOOD TERMS WITH
OTHERS AND WITH YOUR SELF**

**PRACTICE ACCEPTING IMPERFECTION AS PART OF BEING
HUMAN AND THE HUMAN CONDITION**



"If you have trouble falling asleep, lick your feet for a few minutes. It works for my cat!"

NATURAL, BUILT-IN STRESS REDUCERS

BREATHING

MOVING— Walk, run, stretch, dance, change directions, move from here to there, tap fingers or toes

LISTENING AND HEARING— Music, nature, sound of silence

SEEING— Nature, children playing or animals at play

VOICING/ VERBALIZING— Asserting our self and limit setting, saying no, asking for help, sharing our thoughts and feelings, screaming, praying

TOUCHING OR BEING TOUCHED—Feeling the sunshine and the wind as it touches our body; a steaming bath or cold shower; a massage; holding a child's hand or cradling a baby; hugging our self or other, massaging our temples

LAUGHING, CRYING, YAWNING, SIGHING, ORGASM

THE ABILITY TO THINK—Problem solving; changing mind and direction of our life; creating; dreaming the future; making choices; learning new skills

THE ABILITY TO REMEMBER, DAYDREAM, IMAGINE, FANTASIZE—Time traveling to a pleasant past or fulfilling future

SLEEPING

Finding Balance: Just Breathe

Life begins and is sustained by the breath. We cannot live long without it, and yet we pay little if any attention to it until it is unsettled, labored, momentarily lost or difficult to catch.

When breathing is soft, calm and rhythmical, body, mind and spirit follow suit, leading to a softer, calmer and more peaceful way of being and moving through the world. In fact, in order to balance on one leg, or walk on a balance beam or tight rope, one needs to first begin with soft, calm and rhythmical breathing. Balance, whether physical, emotional or spiritual, begins with the breath.

The following are suggestions intended to bring more balance into your life. Begin by simply making moments to pay attention to your breath and to calm your breathing. In calming your breathing, you will become calmer, and your mind, body and spirit will begin to experience balance, breath-by-breath, moment-by-moment.

- ❖ Before getting out of bed, with your eyes still closed, practice focusing your full attention on your breathing. As you inhale, imagine your breath moving downward to your abdomen; notice as the air expands your abdomen and then diaphragm as it moves upward to your lungs; feel your lungs fill with air from bottom to top. Pause in the space where there is no breath. Then, exhale slowly, easily and completely. Think to yourself "letting go". Feel the air as it moves out of your body, and allow your body to be gently pulled downward by gravity. Focus and refocus your attention on your breath. Repeat ten times, stretch your body, and open your eyes. Simply breathing: what better way to start the day.
- ❖ For one or more minutes each day, find a quiet place and practice standing on one leg while breathing slowly and easily inward, and breathing slowly and completely outward. Focus and refocus your attention on your breath. When your thoughts wander, as they will, notice how your body follows and balance is momentarily lost. Bring your attention back to your breath. Balance and breathe. See how long you can keep your balance. You will find that you can keep it as long as you can breathe softly, calmly and rhythmically.
- ❖ For one minute every fifty-nine minutes, practice sitting comfortably in your chair while watching the second hand of a clock. Just breathe. When your mind wanders, gently return it to the second hand on the clock and breathing.
- ❖ During your lunch break, get away from your desk and your work. Take a ten to fifteen-minute walk. Inhale the fresh, clean air and exhale the tension. Pay attention to your surroundings and the feeling of your body as it moves. Feel your breath move in and out. When your thoughts wander, as they will, return to the present moment, your breath and your surroundings.

Life balance is a practice that begins with learning to breathe in a calm and rhythmical manner. Practice.

THINGS WE CAN LEARN FROM A DOG...



Never pass up the opportunity to go for a joyride—allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure

ecstasy . . .



When loved ones come home, always run to greet them . . .



Let others know when they've invaded your territory . . .

TAKE NAPS AND STRETCH BEFORE RISING . . .



Run, romp and play daily . . . Eat with gusto and enthusiasm . . .

BE LOYAL . . .



Never pretend to be something you're not . . . When someone is having a bad day, be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently . . . Thrive on attention and let people touch you . . .



Avoid biting when a simple growl will do . . . On hot days, drink lots of water and lie under a shady tree . . .



when you're happy, dance around and

wag your entire body. . .



No matter how often you're scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout—run right back and make friends . . .



DELIGHT IN THE SIMPLE JOY OF A LONG WALK . . .

And if you don't like something PEE ON IT 

From Herbert Benson's Mind Body Institute

The relaxation response is a physical state of deep rest that changes the physical and emotional responses to stress (e.g., decrease in heart rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension). If practiced regularly, it can have lasting effects when encountering stress throughout the day and can improve health. Regular elicitation of the relaxation response has been scientifically proven to be an effective treatment for a wide range of stress-related disorders. In fact, to the extent that any disease is caused or made worse by stress, the relaxation response can help.

Elicitation of the relaxation response is not difficult. There are two essential steps to eliciting the RR:

- 1. Repetition of a word, sound, phrase, prayer, or muscular activity.**
- 2. Passive disregard of everyday thoughts that inevitably come to mind and the return to your repetition.**

The following is the generic technique taught at the Mind/Body Medical Institute:

- 1. Pick a focus word, short phrase, or prayer that is firmly rooted in your belief system, such as "one", "peace", "The Lord is my shepherd", "Hail Mary full of grace" or "shalom".**
- 2. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.**
- 3. Close your eyes.**
- 4. Relax your muscles, progressing from your feet to your calves, thighs, abdomen, shoulders, head, and neck.**
- 5. Breathe slowly and naturally, and as you do, say your focus word, sound, phrase, or prayer silently to yourself as you exhale.**
- 6. Assume a passive attitude. Don't worry about how well you're doing. When other thoughts come to mind, simply say to yourself, "Oh well", and gently return to your repetition.**
- 7. Continue for ten to 20 minutes.**
- 8. Do not stand immediately. Continue sitting quietly for a minute or so, allowing other thoughts to return. Then open your eyes and sit for another minute before rising.**
- 9. Practice the technique once or twice daily. Good times to do so are before breakfast and before dinner.**

The relaxation response can be brought forth through many techniques in addition to the method above, such as imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, repetitive prayer, meditation, repetitive physical exercises, and breath focus. Each person should choose a technique that conforms to his or her belief system.

ENERGY CONSERVATION:
Refresh, Refuel, Rejuvenate, Relax, Release



Breathe: Inhale deeply and exhale slowly ten times . . . Make time every day to do at least one thing that you enjoy doing . . . Address problems while they are still small . . . Take a brisk or slow, easy walk . . . **Listen to music . . . CHIT CHAT WITH A FRIEND . . .** Read an inspirational story or trashy novel . . . **Laugh, long and hard . . .** Sit alone, look and listen . . . **Picnic . . . Exercise . . . Meditate . . . Order Take Out . . . Dance . . .** Watch a comedy or non-violent, life affirming movie . . . *Help a friend or stranger . . . Eat lunch away from your desk . . . Sing . . . Whistle while you work . . . Be Prepared . . . Pray . . . Take Ten . . . Get a Massage . . .* SHARE A FUNNY STORY OR JOKE . . . **Create something . . .** Sauna or take a long, hot bath or shower . . . **CRY . . . Play pretend with a child . . . Tend your lawn or garden . . .** Perform a simple, random act of kindness . . . **SMILE . . .** Stretch, bend, move . . . Float on your back in the water . . . Make Love . . . **Pick your battles wisely . . . Forgive yourself and others . . . Say "I love you" . . . Play . . . Say NO as needed . . . RUN . . .** Know and respect your limits . . . Pause one minute every hour to breathe, refuel and regroup . . . Take a nap . . . Go to the zoo, a museum, a theatre production, a sporting event, a circus, a fair . . . *Hug someone or something . . . Practice your faith . . . Daydream . . . Watch a sunrise or sunset . . . ASSERT YOURSELF AS NEEDED . . . Listen to your body and rest as needed . . . Sidestep power struggles . . . TRUST YOURSELF . . . Open your sense to the sights, sounds and smells of nature . . . **Practice being fully present in the moment at hand, with whomever and whatever it may present . . .** Whenever possible, leave work at work . . . **USE VACATION TIME TO RETREAT, RELAX, REFUEL AND REJUVENATE . . . ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE AND COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS . . . ASK FOR HELP . . .** Sit quietly, close your eyes and remember or visualize a place of peace . . . **SLEEP . . . cuddle . . . DO ABSOLUTELY NOTHING . . . etc.***

TENSION REDUCERS

The following techniques are natural tension reducers and effective stress management tools. Find a practice that works for you and use it regularly. ***Consult your physician if you have or suspect that you have any medical condition that may be aggravated by physical exertion.***

Quiet Time: Build time into your schedule to retreat and regroup. Even brief respites can be relaxing, refreshing and healing.

Time Out: When life is spinning too fast, or you feel about to lose control, time yourself out for five to ten minutes or until you regain control or a sense of calm.

Stretching: Lengthens muscles and facilitates relaxation.

- x Slowly inhale and reach upward.
- x Slowly exhale and reach downward.
- x Slowly inhale while twisting the upper body to the left.
- x Slowly exhale while twisting the upper body to the right.
- x Repeat.

[Note: Always bend slowly and smoothly, never bounce.]

Yawning: The body's natural way of bringing in more oxygen and energy.

Laughter: Reduces muscle-tension, revitalizes the spirit and stimulates healing.

Body Scan:

- x Lay on your back.
- x Beginning with your feet, move your attention slowly upward to your head.
- x Be aware of any tension or pain that you may be experiencing.
- x Focus your attention on any muscle tightness and tension.
- x Take a few of deep breaths, breathing slowly in and out.
- x Slowly contract your muscle, holding for 5 seconds.
- x Release and relax your muscle.
- x As you relax, imagine your body drifting downward with gravity.

Expanding Breath:

- x Slowly raise your arms above your head while inhaling deeply, fully expanding first your abdomen and then your chest.
- x Exhale completely while slowly lowering your arms.
- x Repeat until you feel calm and refreshed.

Deep Breathing: [Note: This exercise is particularly useful in managing impatience, frustration, anger and conflict.]

- x Inhale quietly and deeply through your nose, fully expanding your abdomen.
- x Exhale slowly and completely, saying or thinking the words "Letting Go".
- x Focus on the sound and feeling of breathing as you become more and more relaxed.
- x Repeat 5- 10 times until calm and refreshed.

Eye Exercises:

- x Focus on a point of interest directly in front of you.
- x Slowly move your eyes upward to the ceiling, then downward to the floor.
- x Slowly move your eyes to the far right, then to the far left.
- x Slowly move your eyes in a circle clockwise, then counter-clockwise.
- x Cup your eyes with the palms of your hands.
- x Repeat.

Neck Exercises:

- x Inhale quietly and deeply through your nose, fully expanding your abdomen.
- x Exhale slowly and completely.
- x Repeat while slowly, gently and carefully bending your head to the left, right, front and back.
- x Repeat while slowly, gently and carefully turning your head to the left, then right.
- x Repeat while slowly and gently rolling your shoulders forward and backward.

Hand Massage:

- x Interlace and slowly stretch your fingers.
- x Knead the palms of your hands.
- x Pinch or put pressure on the area between your thumb and forefinger.
- x Flex your hands, and shake the tension out.
- x Repeat.

Sitting or Walking Meditation:

- x Sit, or walk slowly and rhythmically.
- x Slowly inhale, thinking, "Relax".
- x Slowly exhale, thinking, "Letting Go".
- x Focus your full attention on your breathing and the moment at hand.
- x When your mind wanders (as it will), acknowledge the thoughts and return your attention to your breathing and the moment at hand.
- x Repeat.
- x Spend as much time as you choose.

Talking: Share your problems, frustrations, worries and concerns with a trusted neutral party. If you feel isolated or alone, find a support group to join or a professional counselor to talk with.

