

10 one-minute stress busters

By Ylva Van Buuren

Take a minute or two for yourself and relax with these simple tips.



Preparations and social activities, family obligations and get-togethers can frazzle your nerves. Take a minute or two for yourself and relax with these simple stress busters.

1. Take a green tea break

Green tea contains some caffeine, says Penny Kendall-Reed, a naturopath in Toronto, but it also has compounds -- L-theanine, an amino acid, and epigallocatechin gallate, an antioxidant -- that can help lower stress hormones.

> Great for mornings when you're busy with last-minute shopping.

2. Relax your back

Lie on your back, your knees bent and touching, feet flat and hip-width apart, and arms alongside your body with palms up. Close your eyes and breathe in and out through your nose, slowly and deeply (allowing your belly to rise and fall), for one minute.

> Particularly good for lower-back tension, says Canadian fitness guru Maureen Hagan.

3. Stretch your neck

Stand with your knees soft and feet shoulder-width apart. Slowly rotate your head: lower your right ear toward your right shoulder, then bring your chin toward your chest, then your left ear toward your left shoulder. Continue to roll your head around to the back, but, to protect your spine, don't let it fall too far backward. Do this for 30 seconds. Then change direction and roll your head for another 30 seconds.

> Great way to use your time when you're caught in a long line-up.

4. Laugh!

Keep a joke book in your purse (or print out a few jokes from www.comedycentral.com and www.jokeaday.com).

> A good stress releaser when you're stuck on a bus or in traffic.

5. Use lavender aromatherapy

The herb's scent is calming, centring and rejuvenating.

> Good for what ails you when you get home at the end of a long, busy week

6. Shrug your shoulders

Stand comfortably and lift both shoulders up to your ears as you breathe in through your nose. Pause; as you exhale through your mouth, drop your shoulders back down vigorously, to shake off tension. Repeat five times.

> Try this before walking into a gathering you're feeling tense about.

7. Breathe -- in a square

Sit or stand comfortably. Breathe in slowly through your nose to the count of four. Hold for the same count. Then breathe out through pursed lips for a count of four. Repeat for one minute.

> A great way to relax after a late party -- and before an important meeting at work.

8. Listen to relaxing music

Research shows that music will calm even the grouchiest Scrooge. So listen to something you find soothing. If classical calms you, try Mozart for Relaxation (RCA).

> Particularly good when you have time before holiday house guests arrive.

9. Express your stress

Writing about your stress, or talking to someone who is willing to just listen, can help relieve it. If you don't get it out, says Janice Berger, a physiotherapist in Newmarket, Ont., and author of *Emotional Fitness* (Penguin Canada, 2005, \$25), you'll add anger and a bad mood to your stress.

> A good way to get focused when you're feeling overwhelmed by everything you have to do.

10. Visualize change

Sit comfortably, close your eyes and visualize dealing with an anticipated stressful situation. For example, visualize yourself telling your nasty Uncle John, "Please don't tell that story about me again; it's not funny."

> Particularly good for dreaded get-togethers. "Practise beforehand and you'll feel much stronger in the moment," says Berger.

Source: http://www.canadianliving.com/health/mind_and_spirit/10_one_minute_stress_busters.php