

# ***Take Action Against Stress***

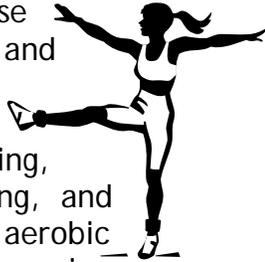
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## ***How to Exercise Away Your Stress***

Physical exercise is a quick, easy way to relieve stress-related tension. Vigorous aerobic exercise has been shown to increase your body's levels of endorphins (a natural sedative) and catecholamines (substances that affect moods). Stretching exercises also reduce stress by relaxing tense muscles- one of the most common stress responses.

## ***Fight Stress With Aerobics***

Aerobic exercise strengthens our hearts and lungs and improves our overall use of oxygen. Activities such as walking, jogging, swimming, cycling, and rowing are excellent aerobic choices. Besides causing chemical changes in the brain that may improve moods, exercising regularly can create a sense of commitment and control, which in itself can improve our mental attitudes and self-images. Many people find that vigorous morning workouts give them a better start on the day. Other people prefer to exercise at the end of their day to help them "unwind" and release pent-up tension. Exercising in the morning or evening is not as important, however, as exercising regularly. Twenty-three minutes of aerobics, done 3 times a week not only benefits your heart, but your peace of mind too.



## ***Fight Stress With Stretching***

When you are under stress, your muscles become tense. When you relax, so do your muscles. Stretching exercises can mimic your body's "relaxation" response by

helping loosen up tight muscles and relieving tension. These stretches are easy to do, take only a few minutes, and can be done anytime, anywhere, by almost anyone!

### **Head and Neck Roll**

Relax your shoulders and let your head roll forward, chin to chest. Slowly rotate your head in a circle without straining your neck. Repeat 5 times. Relax. Then, rotate in the opposite direction and repeat 5 times.

### **Leg Stretch**

Crouch with one leg in front of you and one stretched out behind you. Gently lower your torso as close to the floor as you can. Hold for 10 seconds. Relax. Repeat 5 times, switch leg positions, and repeat again.

### **Back Stretch**

Lie on your back. Keep your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Gently push your lower back onto the floor. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 5 times.

### **Arm Stretch**

Raise your arms above your head, fingers interlaced, palms facing up. Push as far as you can. Hold for 10 seconds. Relax. Repeat 5 times.

## ***Less Stressed and Feeling Fine***

Exercise can make you feel less stressed both physically and mentally. By setting aside just 20-30 minutes a few days a week for exercising, you can reduce the symptoms of stress overload while improving your overall health and well-being.



Adapted from 1987 Parlay International "Take Action Against Stress"

