

Take Action to Reduce Stress

Exercise!

Physical exercise is an effective way to relieve stress-related tension. 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.

Vigorous aerobic exercise has been shown to increase endorphins (a natural sedative) as well as catecholamine (substances that affect mood). 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 tension. Exercising regularly is most important. Completing 2-30 minutes of aerobics 3 times a week benefits not only your body, but also your mind.

Stretch!

Stretching exercises also reduce stress by relaxing tense muscles which is one of the most common stress responses. When you are under stress, your muscles tense. When you relax, so do your muscles.

Stretching exercises mimic your body’s “relaxation” response by loosening tight muscles thereby relieving tension. These stretches are easy to do, take only a few

minutes, and can be done anytime, anywhere, by almost anyone! A proper stretch should not cause pain, but should elicit a feeling of mild discomfort.

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 help you feel less stressed both physically and mentally. Set aside 20-30 minutes a few days a week for exercising and stretching. 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”

