

Six Ways to Relieve Stress and Improve Your Days

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Lots of people feel stress. After all, these are stressful times. We can be stressed about finances, relationships, our jobs, the state of the economy, etc.

There may not be a lot we can do to immediately change the external circumstances in our lives. But there are things we can do to reduce stress.

Stress is the body's physical reaction to things that cause us anxiety or make us uncomfortable. So to reduce stress, we can focus on relaxing the body, and in doing so reduce anxiety.

We store stress in various places in the body. So here are a few simple exercises to help relax the body and reduce stress. You can do these any time you're feeling stressed – whether you're involved in some stressful activity, are just feeling anxious, or just want to relax a bit:

- Relax your jaw and tongue. We store a lot of tension in our jaw and facial muscles.
- Open your lips slightly. This will help you release tension around your jaw. And it will stimulate you to unclench your teeth (which many of us do unconsciously when stressed).
- Close your eyes and relax the muscles around your eyes and cheek bones.
- Take long slow deep breaths, including long exhalations (about ten or so). This will slow your heart rate and help relax your back and shoulder muscles.
- Take a few minutes to breathe so that your inhalations and exhalations are of equal length (count to five in your head for each in breath and each out breath). This also gradually slows the heart rate.
- Relax your diaphragm. That's the muscle below your lungs that helps you breathe in. To do this place your hand in the center of your belly, just above your navel. Take slow deep breaths in a way that pushes your hand outward. This is a particularly good quick fix if you're feeling anxious.

If you need support or feel the time has come to contact a therapist, I invite you to call me for a free telephone consultation. I'm here to help.