

# MANAGING STRESS

## *10 Way to Find Peace*



Our bodies are meant to protect us from danger, to alert us if something is wrong, and to regulate and organize our nervous systems once the danger has passed. With the current pandemic, focus on racial inequities, and political tensions our bodies have become inundated with a more prolonged exposure to stress. This type of stress can be toxic to our brains, causing a cascade of brain chemicals usually reserved for dangerous situations, to wash over us on a daily basis. Many of us wake up each day looking for new hope only to realize that we are still in this very restrictive, tense, and scary time. When we are in a state of fear it can be extremely difficult to move to a place of rest, play, and sound thinking. It is critical that we stop thinking of self-care as a luxury and begin to think of it as survival. Luckily there are some quick, inexpensive, and accessible ways to combat stress.

### 1. FIND YOUR TRIBE

People heal in relationships. When feeling isolated it's easy to slip further into that hole of loneliness. You don't need to see 200 people on social media, but you do need someone you love and trust to check in with on a deeper, genuine level. Being able to connect with others in a meaningful way can help provide comfort and support when we need it.



### 2. SPEND TIME IN NATURE

Nature helps you to gain perspective on life. When troubles and worry feel huge and overwhelming, being in nature or even seeing nature can help shift your perspective to remember how finite we are against the infinite world. Feel the grass under your feet, smell the crisp air, hear the birds, and remember how the earth takes care of you.



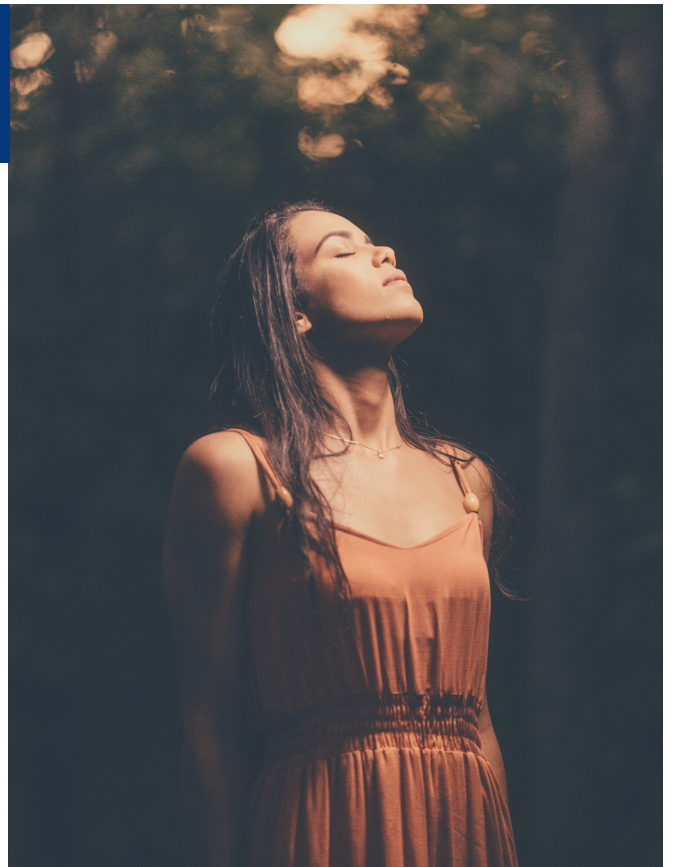
### 3. MOVE YOUR BODY

Long periods of sitting is toxic to your body. Stress is stored in your body's nervous system and we all need ways to release and move through that stress. Unless you have a job that requires hard labor or constant movement, you may have found yourself quite sedentary. If movement is part of your work, you are likely to be moving in a way that is repetitive and restrictive. Either way, your body will appreciate a way to release some of the stored stress it holds. Stretching, yoga, walking, gardening, jogging, and swimming are all examples of how one might move through stress.



### 4. BREATHE IN DEEP AND EXHALE EVEN DEEPER

It is so simple and yet so easy to forget. Our bodies are made to breathe and to bring life into our bodies. We do it without even thinking. But to trigger our nervous systems into a relaxed and present way of being, we often have to remind ourselves to deepen our breaths to wash our nervous systems in the calming neurotransmitters that tell our bodies that everything is okay. These breaths are deep, slow, and are followed by a pause and long out breath. Some even like to make a "ha" sound as they exhale. This is a free and accessible way to practice self-care. When applied regularly, these breaths can make a big impact.





## 5. SEEK QUIET TIME WHEN YOU NEED IT

Our bodies need time to reflect and process all that is going on in our world. Whether that is an illness in the family, work stress, homeschooling, or financial strain, moving at a quick pace with no time to think can burn us out very quickly. Even if you are not an introvert, this quiet time is essential. For many this task seems almost impossible. You may live in a house with many families, you may have a large family with kids running around, or you may just not have time to set aside. Finding this time might include waking up earlier before everyone else, or staying up a little later once others are asleep. For some, it means longer bathroom breaks to “hide” from the world for a moment.



## 6. SET A ROUTINE THAT WORKS FOR YOU

Having a sense of normalcy and predictability can bring some calm to your life. With so much chaos in the world, we need something that is steady and expected. This can be setting a consistent time to go to sleep and wake up each day, or it can be the order in which you do things. When life outside feels chaotic, we can create some structure to help our world feel a bit safer and help us feel more in control. Many find it is especially helpful to write down their routine. This might even be a routine in your thoughts, like deciding to say, “This too shall pass” when confronted with stress.



## 7. DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE ELSE

Under stress we can often become quite self-centered. We can retreat into our own world and disconnect. Doing something simple for someone else can help us to move out of that feeling of isolation. This can be something simple like texting a thoughtful word of encouragement, calling and checking on someone who you know might be struggling, bringing in a neighbor's garbage can for them, or delivering a meal to someone who is sick. By doing something for someone else you will also be doing something for yourself.



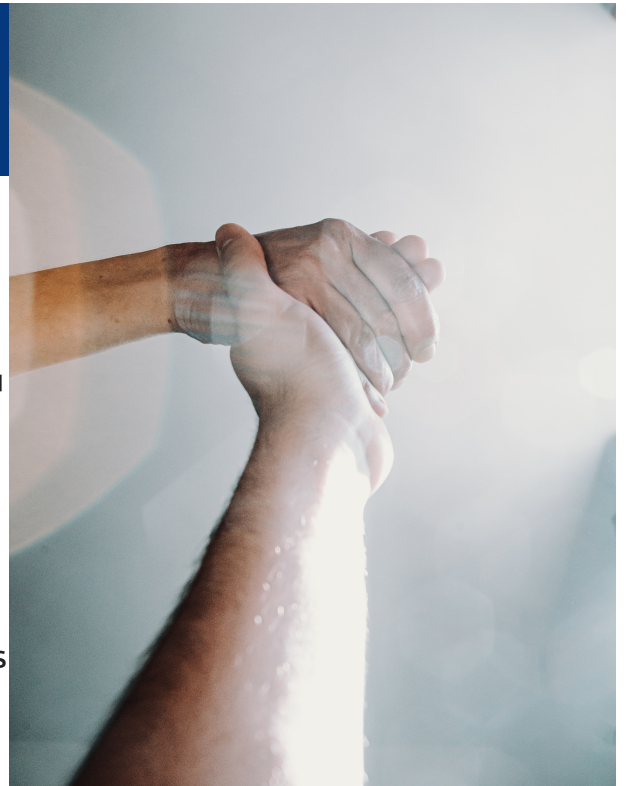
## 8. LIMIT NEGATIVE INFORMATION

The news can be addictive. We seek out information in an attempt to feel safe, but what we read usually only compounds our anxiety. It is like we are constantly waiting for something to happen. Anxiety that propels us to work hard and make a difference can be good, but the kind of anxiety that the world is experiencing right now is not one that is commonly productive. Unless you are a scientist, a medical provider, or a politician, you may feel a bit useless and incapable of solving the issues we face. For this reason, it is important to shield yourself from too much information. When you don't have the means or the resources to make things happen, sitting on toxic information can be harmful to our mental health.



## 9. BE KIND TO YOURSELF

Do things that make you feel better about you. It seems silly to think about your skincare routine, your nails, your meal plan, your exercise regimen, your hobbies, or your mental health needs right now, but taking time to think about what makes you feel confident, content, and at peace can make a world of difference. It's different for everyone, but whatever that thing is that makes you feel better, it's worth doing. It might be a bubble bath, painting your nails, trying a new hairstyle, preparing a nutritious meal, or learning a new skill. These things unlock creativity and fill your cup. The creative part of your brain is a great place to be when facing stress.



## 10. FIND WAYS TO EXPRESS GRATITUDE

Being grateful for what you have acts like a switch in your brain. It is a fantastic antidote to anxiety and worry. In a time when the world feels unsettled, we can settle ourselves by remembering even simple things that we do have right now. You might be grateful for your family, your home, food on the table, your health, your job, or even your ability to walk, smile, or speak. Even when we have lost so much or are lacking so much, we can find something to be grateful for each day. Saying these out loud or writing them down is a simple and free way to flip the switch out of anxiety.



These simple ideas are not meant to replace professional care. If you are experiencing feelings of depression, hopelessness, or panic the implementation of these strategies alone will not serve as treatment. If you have found yourself experiencing these symptoms or unable to enjoy life, reach out and seek help from a doctor or mental health professional. You are not alone in your feelings and there are resources in your community that can help.