

DAILY HOPE PUBLISHING

11 QUICK & EASY STRESS RELIEVERS



By Tamara K. Anderson

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STRESS RELIEVERS

Tip #1. Prayer

“We have to pray with our eyes on God, not on the difficulties.”

~ Oswald Chambers

Prayer is not new. It's been around since Adam and Eve. Praying can help us develop a relationship with God who will guide us and help us through any challenge or stress we may face in life. Prayer gives us the opportunity to express gratitude and invite God's Spirit into our lives. And having the Spirit can help us think of ways to manage stressful situations in our lives which we maybe hadn't thought of before. Because God is smart and all-knowing, He can help us with these things.

I have found solutions to problems challenges and stresses in my life. Ideas will just pop into my brain--not always while praying--sometimes they come later.

One day my list of things to do was longer than I knew I could accomplish in one day. So I prayed and asked God for help. He helped me think of things I could do simultaneously like, *When you're walking, call your sister.*

I was able to accomplish much more than usual that day because I asked God to help me. So pray, listen and act on ideas.

Tip #2. Prioritize Exercising

“Take care of your body. It's the only place you have to live.” ~ Jim Rohn

When I have stress, it feels like big knot in my stomach area. I woke up one morning feeling stressed out. Since I was up before everybody else, I thought, *I have got to pray, and I've got to run.*

I've never been a runner, but this ball of stress in my stomach was so big that I knew I needed to run. So I grabbed our dog and took him for a jog. I jogged for 50 yards, walked for a little bit, caught my breath and jogged again. This simple act of jogging/walking helped me get rid of the stress ball in my stomach.

Remember, exercising doesn't always mean going to the gym. You can do yoga, walk, run, swim, etc. The cool thing about exercise is it produces endorphins, which naturally improve your mood immediately. So if you're feeling stressed or anxious, or depressed--exercising really helps.

I had the opportunity to talk to a dear friend who has struggled with major depressive disorder for the last two decades. When I asked how she coped, she mentioned both prayer and exercising. She says there are a days she doesn't want to get out of bed, but she tells herself, “You are worth it. Get up and exercise every day.”

Sometimes it's too hot outside where she lives. So she has a little trampoline in her room, and she will roll out of bed and make herself bounce on that little trampoline for at least five minutes. She says it really does help her get up, get dressed, get moving, and that really does help improve her mood.

Worry causes stress. Prayer causes peace. Worry less. Pray more!

Let exercise be your stress reliever!

Tip #3. Physical Touch

"I've learned that every day you should reach out and touch someone. People love a warm hug, or just a friendly pat on the back."

~ Maya Angelou

I know that touching people during Coronavirus is considered taboo. But we all need physical touch. So hopefully you have a friend or family member you can pat on the back, touch or hug.

Simply by giving my husband a hug a couple of times a day helps decrease my stress. I can physically feel the stress pouring off my shoulders as we hug. There really is something amazing about physical touch.

Another cool fact I found out about physical touch or hugging is that when you hug someone, a hormone called oxytocin is released. This hormone is associated with higher levels of happiness and lower levels of stress. So give somebody a pat on the back, hug a friend and relieve stress at the same time.

**Tip #4. Aromatherapy**

"Aromatherapy is extremely useful. If you want to go to sleep at night, and you have an aroma that calms your mind, it will help you sleep."

~ Deepak Chopra

I'll be honest, this is not a tip I had ever really thought of for stress reduction. As I was researching stress relieving tactics, I saw aromatherapy and I thought, *I wonder if it helps? I've never tried it.* So I tried it.

I happen to have a little aromatherapy diffuser. I like the scents you can put in there to add a little bit of *flavor* to a room. So I googled what scents are popular with relieving stress and I found this list:

- Orange
- Lemon
- Neroli
- Jasmine
- Clary Sage
- Patchouli
- Lavender
- Bergamot
- Yuzu
- Rosemary
- Sweet Basil
- Frankincense
- Lemongrass

My Experience with Aromatherapy

After my research, I filled my little diffuser and added a little bit of orange and frankincense. I was surprised that just smelling the scents really did help me feel calmer. I thought, *Holy cow! This works. Why am I not using this every day?* I now use my aromatherapy diffuser more often.

Hugs matter!
One hug from
the right
person takes
all your stress
away!

"Smell is a
potent wizard
that transports
us across
thousands of
miles and all
the years we
have lived."
-Helen Keller

Tip #5. Writing or Journaling

"Writing is thinking on paper." ~ William Zinsser

One day when I was feeling extraordinarily stressed, I sat down and journaled. I began writing about why I felt so stressed. As I wrote about it, I figured out some of the reasons and knowing what was causing the stress is key to being able to fix the stressors.

Sometimes we feel stressed but don't know why because there is so much going on. So slowing down and writing about it on a piece of paper (it doesn't even have to be in a journal), can help us write the stress out.

The scientific benefits of journaling astound me. Journaling or expressive writing have been proven to:

- Reduce stress
- Improve health
- Boost memory and comprehension
- Increase emotional well-being and happiness
- Evoke mindfulness, self-confidence, increased perspective and creativity.

Try journaling today!

**Tip #6. Leisure Fun**

"It's not a man's working hours that is important, it is how he spends his leisure time." ~ Marilynne Robinson

I am particularly guilty of not taking enough leisure time. I tend to have my list, attack it with a fervor, and I'm usually so tired by the time I'm done that I don't take time to do enjoyable things. So I've tried to make a conscious effort to be better at this.

One summer day, my husband had the day off. We scheduled a "day-date" and went kayaking. Kayaking is fun and is one of our favorite hobbies we do together. It was so soothing to put our hands and feet in the water to paddle along and to be out in nature. Making time for leisure activities which decrease stress is critical. When I came back from kayaking, I was relaxed and happy.

Find leisure activities, whether they be sports, hobbies or activities you enjoy. Maybe you enjoy painting or woodworking. Find and schedule time for these breaks. They are so important to work-life balance.

It's important to do something for you every day. You are worth taking care of!

I'm pretty good about leisurely reading daily because that is one of my favorite stress relievers. Books take me away on a journey somewhere. So find a leisure activity which will help you de-stress.

"I can shake off everything as a write; my sorrows disappear, my courage is reborn."
-Anne Frank

"Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes... including you."
-Anne Lemott

Tip # 7. Gratitude

"Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude." ~ Ralph Waldo Emerson

Boy isn't that thought provoking? We can be thankful for even the hardest times, because hard things teach us the most profound lessons.

Gratitude helps us look at the past or present and be grateful for it. And when we're thankful it brings peace. Gratitude also helps create an optimistic vision for tomorrow.

Benefits of Gratitude

Did you know scientists have proven when we express gratitude, our brain releases dopamine and serotonin, two "feel good" neurotransmitters? These neurotransmitters improve our mood immediately, making us feel happy from the inside.

Another fact is people who express gratitude are shown to have lower stress, a better mental health and a better quality of life.

Joni Emmerling, a wellness coach explains the benefits of gratitude this way, "Being grateful for your blessings cancels out negative thoughts and worries."

Another benefit to writing down your things you're thankful for is you can re-read and remember things to be grateful for when you're having a particularly bad or stressful day.

Ways to Express Gratitude

We can express gratitude verbally by telling family or friends about the blessings we have seen or experienced that day. When negative thoughts intrude, switching to positive thoughts of gratitude can stop the negative self-thought cycle. Prayer is also a fantastic way to express gratitude. God loves a grateful heart.

One of my favorite ways to end the day is to journal. I like to write a bullet list of blessings I'm thankful for nightly in my journal. Confession: sometimes when I'm exhausted, I just thank God in my prayer because I'm too tired to journal.

Gratitude and Depression

One friend with major depressive disorder, said she tries to be thankful for at least three things daily. Being grateful has blessed her because so many times when you have depression, or high amounts of stress, it's hard to process and think of things you can possibly be thankful for. This is because the stresses which drag her down seem so heavy.

And so actually pausing and thinking of things to be thankful for, help pull her back into a more positive outlook on life. So this is something that's proven not only with me but with hundreds and thousands of others.

"The struggle ends where gratitude begins."

-Neale Donald Walsh

A grateful heart is a magnet for miracles!

Tip #8. Laughter

"A good laugh overcomes more difficulties and dissipates more dark clouds than any other one thing." ~ Laura Ingalls Wilder

My husband has always been a jokester and loves laughing. One of the things that he likes to do daily is find funny memes which he copies and saves. Then every night after our family scripture reading, my daughter says, "Dad, show us some funny memes." And he'll scroll through these memes and we will laugh together. This is a fun little tradition that he started which has blessed our family. Laughing does dissipate stress. It's fantastic!

Benefits of Laughter

Did you know that laughter releases endorphins, just like exercise? And the cool thing about endorphins is they can improve your mood and decrease the stress causing hormone of cortisol and adrenaline.

Medicine of Laughter in a Hospital Bed

In 2001, after my husband and I were in a bad car accident, I spent a week and a half in a hospital. I was in a lot of pain and was having trouble breathing. I wasn't used to being stuck in a hospital bed, and it was hard and discouraging.

So my husband brought me some VHS tapes of *The Three Stooges*. Watching these funny movies made me laugh, distracted me from the pain and helped me feel better. So find a movie, a show, some funny memes, or some comics which will help you laugh and get rid of stress. You can even call your favorite funny person and laugh together.

**Tip #9. Sunshine**

"No matter how dark and gloomy it looks in your life right now, if you'll release the weight of those burdens, you will see the sun break forth."

~ Joel Osteen

A few months ago, I went outside because I was feeling stressed and stood out in the sunshine for 15 minutes. It felt so good. I could just feel the stress pouring off me. This got me thinking, *Does getting out in the sun help you relieve stress?* So I started doing some research on this.

Medical professionals say getting 5 to 15 minutes of sunlight will help reduce inflammation, improves cell growth, and contributes to better sleep, stronger bones, better mood and lower blood pressure. So getting out in the sun really does help.

If it's cloudy where you live, don't worry, you can get either a light box or take a vitamin D supplement. So get de-stressed and get a little sun every day.

"Laughing is, and will always be, the best form of therapy."

-Dau Voire

Sunshine makes me HAPPY!

Tip #10. Hammocking

"My perfect day is constantly changing. Right now, it would be to lie around in a hammock reading with a portable phone and a table of food next to it. I would spend all day there." ~ Eric Stoltz

When my eldest son went to college, he found great joy in hammocking—laying in a hammock in the sunshine or in his apartment. When he came home for the summer, he brought his hammock with him and we began to use it. We have been delighted with the results.

One day, over Christmas, we strung it up between two trees on a beach in Hawaii and just sat in the shade enjoying the beach. And ah, doesn't that scene just paint a picture of relaxation for you?

Benefits

So believe it or not, there are actual physical and emotional benefits to hammocking. People in South and Central America have been using hammocks to sleep in for centuries. Hammocks have been used to help with insomnia. They help you fall asleep faster and sleep more deeply. And when you get better sleep, you feel better right?

Hammocks improve blood circulation and blood pressure, get rid of toxins, improve mental health and even are used as therapy.

Swinging also helps improve your blood circulation, which can help clear congestion if you've got a cold, and it sure helps with stress reduction.

Our cute son Nathan, who has autism, had a hammock swing in his room for years. *He loved his hammock!* There were times we feared he would swing so hard we were scared he would rip the hinge out of the ceiling. But he never did.

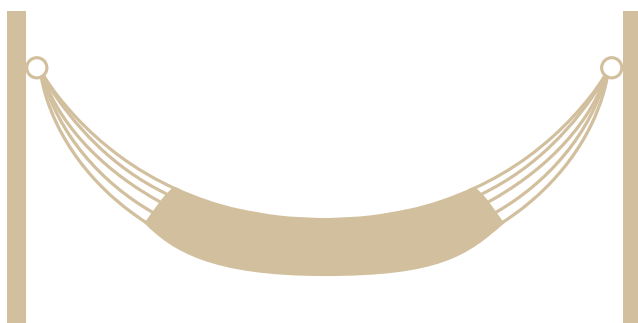
Hammocks have been used as therapy especially for people with autism, vestibular or balance issues.

My Experience Hammocking

One summer day, I went out on the back porch to have a snack and I sat in our hammock and just sat and swung. Sitting in the sun in a hammock, helped me relax. I could feel the stress releasing from my body. And before I knew it, my eyelids are drooping. And I almost fell asleep.

I have napped in our hammock before and it is wonderful!

So there's something super relaxing about hammocking. If you've never tried it before, it is fantastic!



"My motto was always to keep swinging."
-Hank Aaron

In a hammock by the sea, is where I really want to be.

Tip #11. Napping

"Think what a better world it would be if we all, the whole world, had cookies and milk about three o'clock every afternoon and then lay down on our blankets for a nap." ~ Barbara Jordan

The National Sleep Foundation has found that naps help you:

- Feel more alert
- Improve energy
- Enhance your motor skills
- Increase attention
- Zap stress
- Boost your mood

So the more sleep you get the less irritable and stressed you are. That makes sense, doesn't it?

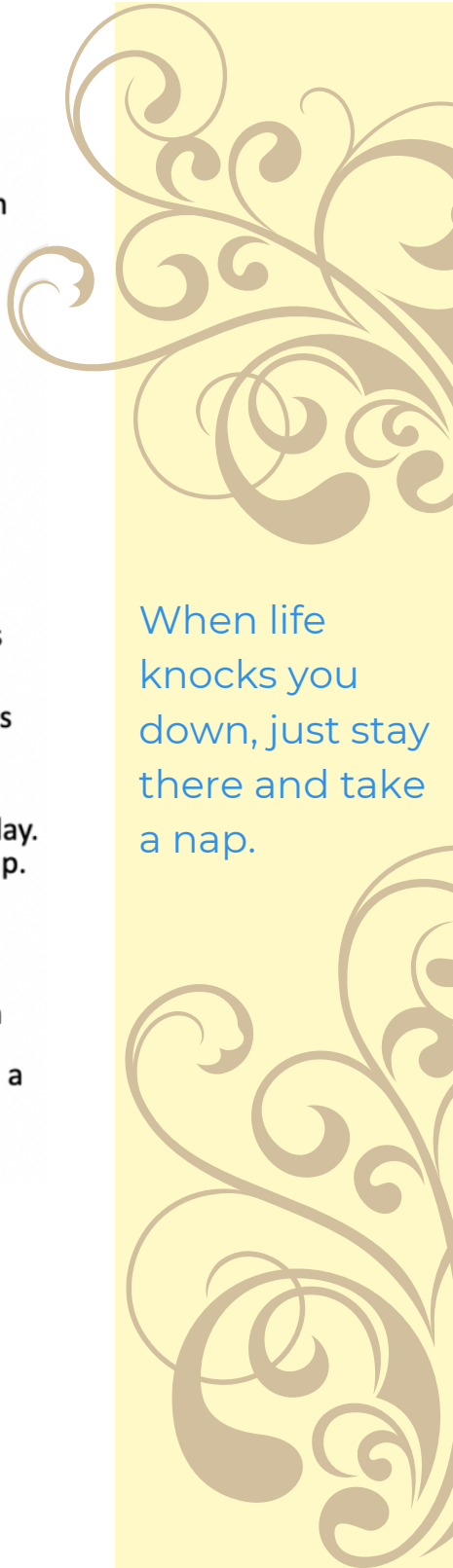
And a 20-minute nap is healthier for you than an energy drink. So, maybe it is worth trying more often.

For me, napping is good for my soul. I found that if I take a 20-minute power nap when I'm exhausted, I am reinvigorated and happier for the rest of the day. And hence, my family and friends around me are happier as well. So get a nap.

Conclusion

I hope you can incorporate some of these stress-relieving tactics in your own life and feel more joy and hope. If you find this document helpful or enjoy using one of the stress-relieving tips shared here, I invite you to share it with a friend.

Let's begin a revolution of less stress, more joy and greater hope!



When life
knocks you
down, just stay
there and take
a nap.

"Every day
brings a
choice: to
practice stress
or practice
peace."
-Joan
Borysenko