

## The American Institute of Stress

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## 10 Proven Stress Management Techniques

**Just as stress is different for each of us,  
no stress reliever works for everyone.  
Find what works best for you.**

1. Before you let something get to you, ask yourself, "Will this really make much difference 5 years from now?"
2. Curl your toes against the soles of your feet as hard as you can for 15 seconds, then relax. Next progressively tense and relax your leg, stomach, back, shoulder, and neck muscles in the same fashion. These exercises can be done anywhere and, in any order, to provide both physical and mental relief.
3. Sit or lie in a comfortable position, breathe deeply from your abdomen, count to 5, and exhale. As you inhale, imagine you are pulling strength into your body and anxiety is being forced out when you exhale. Try doing this for 3-5 minutes twice a day, or whenever you feel tense.
4. Try to relax as much as possible in a comfortable, quiet environment with your eyes closed. Breathe quietly in a slow rhythmic fashion. With each exhalation, repeat a simple word or sound softly or even silently.
5. If you can't close your eyes, pick a spot about 10 feet away to look at, and let it go slightly out of focus. Say the following phrases to yourself: My arms are heavy and relaxed. As you say this relax your arms and shoulders as much as possible, wait until you feel the tension leave. My legs are heavy and relaxed. As you say this relax your arms and shoulders as much as possible, wait until you feel the tension leave. My mind is calm and quiet. Try to rest your mind, imagine a quiet pool with no thoughts rippling to the surface. Repeat these two or three times until you feel notably relaxed.
6. Visualize you are on a beach, listening to the waves coming in and feeling the warm sun on your back. Try to make the sounds and sensations as vivid as possible. Concentrate on the pleasure and peaceful reaction it induces. It doesn't have to be a beach, it might be an erotic fantasy, a wheat field, or some other memorable experience, be sure to include all of the sensuous details.
7. Smile inwardly with your eyes and mouth, meaning let go of the tension in your face. Now imagine you are taking a deep breath through a straw all the way down to your abdomen. Let your jaw and shoulders go limp while you feel a comforting wave of warmth and heaviness seeping all the way down to your toes. It takes practice to master this technique, but it is highly effective in achieving relaxation in a short period of time.
8. Listen to music to relax and lift your mood.
9. Take a brisk 10 to 15 minute walk to clear your mind.
10. Satisfy your personal needs. Make it a point to take 30 minutes a day to do whatever you want— including nothing at all. Pampering yourself is a powerful stress reliever.