

THE PROACTIVE

A MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Striving to educate our members to be more ProActive towards a healthier lifestyle.



Stress Management

—Anywhere, Anytime

Historically, stress was our friend. It acted as a protective mechanism that warned us of danger; a natural reaction that told us when to run. Stress has remained part of the evolutionary drive because of its usefulness in survival. When used at the right time, stress increases our awareness and improves physical performance in short bursts. Yet repetitive exposure of the stress response can lead to long-lasting psychological and physical health issues. While it is unrealistic to aim towards being stress-free all of the time, we can all benefit from identifying our stress and managing it better.

The key to quick stress relief is to experiment and discover the unique sensory experiences that work best for you. Here are 5 tips you can try right away:

1 Be Mindful

Start by simply being aware of your thoughts. Try to observe your thoughts as an outsider. Take note of what's going on, but without judging or attaching to the details. Then just let them go. They'll come back again—but continue to do the same "thought watching" and they'll slowly lessen. This is otherwise known as being "mindful."



2 Positive Self-Talk

Positive self-talk can help you calm down and control stress. With practice, you can learn to shift negative thoughts to positive ones. For example:

- "I can't do this." > "I'll do the best I can. I've got this."
- "Everything is going wrong." > "I can handle this if I take one step at a time."
- "I hate it when this happens." > "I know how to deal with this; I've done it before."
- "I feel helpless and alone." > "I can reach out and get help if I need it."
- "I can't believe I screwed up." > "I'm human, and we all make mistakes. I can fix it."

To really make it work, practice positive self-talk every day—in the car, at your desk, before you go to bed or whenever you notice negative thoughts.

3 Tune Into Your Senses

By tuning into your senses—see, smell, touch, taste and hear—you will automatically slow down the brain. Spend at least one minute on each:

- **What can you see?** Look close and far, colors, shapes, and light.
- **What can you hear?** Hear as many sounds as you can and keep looking for new ones, don't focus on any one for too long.
- **What can you taste?**
- **What can you smell?** Focus on the smells around you—what are they and how many can you find?
- **What can you feel?** Send your attention to the parts of your body that have contact with something, like the earth, a chair, or table.

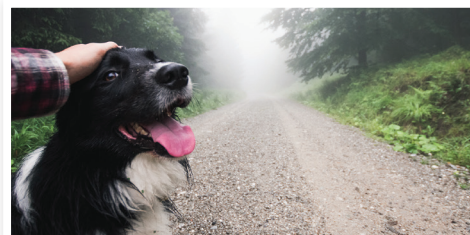
4 Get Moving

When you're stressed, the last thing you probably feel like doing is getting up and exercising. But physical activity is a huge

stress reliever—and you don't have to spend hours in a gym to experience the benefits. Get those feel good endorphins by:

- Taking your dog for a walk
- Using the stairs instead of the elevator
- Putting on some music and dancing around
- Walking to the store

While just about any form of physical activity can help burn away tension and stress, rhythmic activities are especially effective. Good choices include: walking, running, swimming, dancing, cycling, tai chi, and aerobics.



5 Find Your Happy Place

Doing things you enjoy, even if only for 10 or 15 minutes, can make you feel good. Do any of these resonate with you?:

- Pet your dog or cat
- Hug a loved one
- Do something to help someone else
- View a favorite photo
- Smell a specific scent
- Listen to a favorite piece of music
- Taste a piece of gum or a mint
- Make art—draw, color, paint
- Play a musical instrument
- Read a book, short story, or magazine
- Sew, knit, or crochet
- Play with your kids
- Take a relaxing bath
- Meditate or practice yoga
- Work in the garden
- Go for a bike ride