

# Stress Relief Activities to Keep Your Cool

Stress manifests itself in different ways. The kids are acting up, that's stress. You are moving into a new house, that's stress. You are not going to meet a deadline, that's stress. The ironic part is that low amounts of stress can be beneficial in motivating us and improving our all-around performance. Although, the KEY there is low amounts!

## Stress Relief Activities You Can Do at Home

- **Laugh, even if it is forced.** It is true what they say: laughter is the best medicine. A good chuckle stimulates circulation and soothes tension in your body. Laughter is also known to reduce levels of stress hormones including cortisol, epinephrine, and dopamine. So, it is scientific! Tell a joke, make a funny face, or fake laugh until it turns into uncontrollable laughter. We dare you to try it!
- **Meditate for 10 minutes.** Simple meditation does not take long at all and can help you control stress, improve relaxation, and decrease anxiety. You have heard this stress relief tip before but following these simple instructions will make it seem less intimidating. Whether sitting or standing, close your eyes and simply focus on your breath. Think about the act of filling and depleting your lungs with air and try not to let your attention stray. After 10 minutes of deep focus, you might be surprised at the benefits you will feel from setting an intention and creating a place to quiet your mind.
- **Treat yourself to some dark chocolate.** Dark chocolate has been found to decrease the stress-related hormone, glucocorticoid. So, add it to your favorite treat.
- **Dance like nobody's watching.** You might not be home alone but convince your family to join in on the fun too! Challenge your kids or significant other to a dance off and create routines that can be performed right in your living room. If you would like to do something a little less formal, put on your favorite song and just start moving and grooving. Once those endorphins kick in, you will be feeling better in no time, when the body feels good the mind does too.

- **Give someone a big bear hug.** Human contact is an automatic stress relief, so give your loved ones a big bear hug. A warm embrace has been related to the release of oxytocin, often called “the bonding hormone,” so not only will you feel better, but the ones you are hugging will too. It is time for hugs all around.
- **Look through happy photos.** Looking at images of loved ones and happier times is proven to help reduce stress and decrease anxiety. The snapshots serve as a simple reminder that we are loved and cared for, which in turn makes us feel safe. The next time you are feeling stressed, whip out the old photo albums. You can also set up an [at-home photo booth](#) with your family to capture moments that'll keep you smiling even when life gets rough.
- **Pucker up.** Kissing causes your brain to release stress-relieving endorphins, which in turn create a quick and natural mood boosting elixir just for the two of you. Share a kiss (or two) with your partner because it will make you feel warm and fuzzy.
- **Create a “gratitude sandwich.”** This is not a typical sandwich you would have for lunch, but it's definitely a great one to start serving up. Sandwich one thing that is going wrong between two things that you are grateful for. Write them down or say them aloud to really focus in on the good things in your life. In a world where most of us spend too much time in our own minds with negative thoughts, it is important to challenge these and get on the road to feeling better. Who is ready for a sub?
- **Smell your partner's shirt.** It might sound weird or even creepy at first, but research from the [Journal of Personality and Social Psychology](#), proves that the scent of a romantic partner has been found to help lower stress levels. Try wearing your partner's shirt to bed. Or if you're in a long-distance relationship, swap shirts the next time you see one another.
- **Get 8-10 hours of sleep.** [Only 20 percent of adults say](#) the quality of their sleep is very good or excellent. On top of that, being stressed out makes it more difficult to get the proper amount of rest. But that does not mean it is not important! Being well rested improves your stress levels as well as your mental and physical health. If you are having trouble sleeping at night, try taking a warm bath before bed, meditating or doing some deep breathing exercises.