Stress Reducing Tips

Slow-Down Techniques

10-SECOND BREATHING
In an acute situation, when your mind or body is racing out of control, slow down your breathing to a 10-second cycle, 6 breaths a minute. Find a clock or watch with a second hand and inhale for 5 seconds (odd number on clock face) then exhale for 5 seconds (even number). Keep it up for 2-5 minutes, or until your pace slows down.

60-SECOND BREAK
Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Visualize yourself lounging on a sunny beach or watching the sunset or relaxing in the shower or sauna.

5-MINUTE VACATION
Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Then visualize a favorite place or activity. Let your imagination carry you away to a special spot that's refreshing and relaxing.

CHEST MASSAGE
Relax your chest muscles and open up your breathing with a vigorous massage along the midline and across the chest below your collarbone.

BOTHER LIST
Write down a list of all the worries, pressures and concerns that are crowding your mind and clamoring for attention. Then get rid of the list or tuck it in your wallet for later attention.

PEACEFUL FOCUS
Focus on something pleasant and beautiful in your immediate environment (a blade of grass, a painting, a color). Concentrate on the beauty you see and breathe it in. Allow that beauty to slow you down.

Gear-Up Techniques

STRETCH AND MOVE
Stand up and stretch. Arch your back and stretch your arms and fingers out to the side. Hold that posture for awhile and then let go. Now move your body all around to get the blood pumping. Clap your hands. Jump up and down. MOVE!

EXHILARATION BREAK
Imagine yourself somewhere exciting, exhilarating or awe-inspiring (e.g., standing on a cliff above the ocean, performing for a large audience, cheering at an exciting football game, crossing the finish line at a race, laughing uproariously with friends, peering over the rim of
the Grand Canyon, giving birth or watching birth). Let the vividness of that vision charge your batteries.

PEP TALK
Give yourself a pep talk. Use your best persuasive powers to motivate, encourage, cajole, support, cheer, challenge yourself. Ask somebody else to join in!

STIRRING MUSIC
Turn on some lively music like a march or a mazurka. Start moving. Dance. Bounce. March. Sing along. Get involved. Let the music pump you up and pull you along.

BODY BRACER
Gently pat or tap all over your body in an energizing rhythm. Keep it up until you tingle all over and are charged up.

EXERCISE
Vigorous exercise of any kind is a sure-fire way to get geared up. Add a creative twist for some extra punch.

Loosen-Up Techniques

PRETZEL
Imagine that your body is all tied up in knots and only you know how to untie them. Beginning with your toes and gradually moving up the body, tense and relax each set of muscles. Visualize that you are tightening the knots as you tense the muscles and picture yourself undoing the knots as you relax the muscles and let go.

BREATHE INTO TENSION
Close your eyes and take a deep breath. As you become aware of any points of tension, "breathe into" that spot, allowing the breath to bring calm to the area and carry away tension as you exhale.

SELF-MASSAGE
Reach across your body and massage the muscles of your neck and shoulder with long, firm strokes. Knead any especially tight areas with firm, circular or back and forth motions. Then repeat the process on the other side. With both hands massage the base of your skull with firm, circular strokes. Continue over the scalp and face, stopping to give special attention wherever you notice tension. Don't forget the jaw!

SHAKE A LEG
Stand up and shake an arm, a leg, the other arm, the other leg, your whole body. Then take a deep breath and let yourself go limp all over.

REFERENCE: