

HEALTH · MIND & BODY



# Stress Relief Guide

Practical ways to calm your mind  
and protect your wellbeing

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Edition 2026 · Free educational guide

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## THE BASICS

# What Stress Does to Your Body

Stress is the body's natural response to pressure or threat. Short bursts can help you perform, but constant stress wears down body and mind.

When you feel threatened, your brain triggers the release of stress hormones such as adrenaline and cortisol. Your heart beats faster, muscles tense and breathing quickens. This “fight or flight” reaction is useful in emergencies. Problems begin when the alarm stays switched on for weeks or months.

## Common signs of stress

**Mind**

Worry, irritability, trouble concentrating, feeling overwhelmed.

**Body**

Muscle tension, headaches, stomach problems, racing heart.

**Sleep and energy**

Trouble falling asleep, waking at night, constant tiredness.

**Behaviour**

Withdrawing from others, changes in appetite, more smoking or alcohol.

**Stress is normal. Ignoring it for too long is what causes harm.**

## TOOLS THAT WORK

# Six Techniques to Reduce Stress

You do not need hours of free time. Even a few minutes a day can lower tension and improve how you cope.

**Slow breathing**

Breathe in for four seconds, out for six, for a few minutes. Slow exhales calm the nervous system.

**Move your body**

Walking, stretching, yoga or any exercise you enjoy releases tension and improves mood.

**Spend time outside**

Even a short walk in a park or green space is linked with lower stress.

**Write it down**

Listing worries and one next step for each makes problems feel more manageable.

**Connect with people**

Talking with a friend or family member is one of the most effective stress buffers.

**Set boundaries**

Plan breaks, say no to overload and protect time for rest and hobbies.

## A 2-minute reset

- Sit comfortably and relax your shoulders
- Breathe in slowly through the nose and out slowly through the mouth
- Name five things you can see and three you can hear
- Return to your task with one clear next step

## WHEN TO GET HELP

# Know When Stress Becomes Too Much

Asking for help is a sign of strength. Long-lasting stress can lead to anxiety, depression and physical illness.

**Reach out to a doctor or mental health professional if**

- Stress or low mood lasts for weeks and does not improve
- You cannot sleep, eat or concentrate as usual
- You rely on alcohol or other substances to cope
- You feel hopeless or have thoughts of harming yourself. In that case, contact your local emergency number or a crisis line right away

## Lifestyle foundations

Regular sleep, balanced meals, physical activity, and limiting caffeine and alcohol build resilience. Talking therapies, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), have good evidence for helping people manage stress and anxiety, and a doctor can advise on the best options for you.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

# Your Calm Checklist

Small daily actions add up. Pick one or two and start today.

**Today, try to**

- Take five minutes of slow breathing
- Go for a short walk outside
- Talk to someone you trust
- Plan one break and protect your sleep
- Ask for professional help if stress feels too heavy

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