

**STRESS** is widely recognized as one of the biggest contributors to the state of our mental and physical health. How we choose to manage it can impact our wellness on a deep level. Stress has many dimensions but is simply defined as the “perception or experience of not being able to handle what life brings us,” i.e. we believe that we don't have the resources (the energy, time, money, mood, etc.) to cope with what's presented. Stress is an attitude of overwhelm and the non-stop onslaught of your “fight-flight” primal instincts. Signs that you are under too much stress include: difficulty concentrating, getting sick often, flareups of autoimmune conditions, muscle tension, digestive problems, drug and alcohol abuse, fatigue, depression, headaches, irritability and increased anger or anxiety. In today's society, our brains are either on autopilot, or emergency break. Let's find some ways for conscious cruising! While we always recommend a customized spa day for ultimate relaxation, here are some tips from Vida Pura Spa to help you reduce your over all stress levels.

## GRATITUDE JOURNALING

people who frequently feel grateful are more energetic, optimistic and happy . When you have an attitude of love for your body and life, you will treat yourself in healthy ways and engage in many of these tips. Cultivate gratitude in your own life by writing down a list of things that you feel grateful for in this moment.

## BRAIN DUMP

Write for a few minutes each morning upon waking up and just get out all of the blocks, stresses, worries, and to-dos that might be hindering you during the day.

## REDUCE “SNACCS”

Our diet can severely stress our body & mindset. Nourish your body with “alive” food and take breaks from the bad habits or SNACCS—Sugar (refined), Nicotine, Alcohol, Caffeine, & Chemicals— these can undermine our body and add to stress.

## GET OUTSIDE

Experience the beauty of nature! Be with the trees, by the water, walk through a garden, or wherever you enjoy to clear your head and boost endorphins. Walks in nature actually put your body into a state of meditation, thanks to a phenomenon known as “involuntary attention” during which something holds our attention, but simultaneously allows for reflection, decreasing anxiety and stress.

## SLEEP / POWER NAP

Switch off TV & electronics about an hour prior to getting into bed. Reduce caffeine intake before bed time in order to get the maximum amount of time. During the day, a 15–20 minute power nap can energize your body and rejuvenate your thoughts.

## TAKE A YOGA CLASS

Many find peace, calm, and balance with yoga. It truly is a whole body experience that quiets the mind and manipulates the body into the stress-relieving positions while the gaining flexibility and strength of both mind and spirit. This conscious letting go of rigidity allows us to be more open-minded and less stressed.

## LEMON WATER

Lemon water alkalizes your body's pH level and and brings balance to the start of your day. Try warming a cup of water with a few slices of lemon & honey in place of your coffee.

## BE A GOAL-DIGGER!

Each week, write out your goals for the week with deadlines next to them. List one goal per page, think about the short-term steps it will take to make each one happen and write them down underneath. Go back to your goals notebook and check off items as you go.



## PRIORITIZING

When daily tasks begin to pile up, stress & anxiety levels rise to meet the increasing demands. Prioritizing these to-do lists and letting go of those that are less important is a powerful way of increasing mental clarity. To start, create a list of the 10-15 things that need to be accomplished that day or week, and rate how critical each task is. Three or four of the tasks will probably be absolutely crucial, and at least four or five will be relatively unimportant. Cross those items off the list and focus your attention on the most important matters, while letting go of the least important tasks. Or better yet – delegate those tasks.

## CREATE A CHILL-OUT ROUTINE

In the same way a pre-bedtime ritual puts you in the mood for sleep, a pre-downtime routine helps you get in the mood for relaxation. Changing your outfit after work can change your mindset, for example. Perhaps going for a walk or taking a bubble bath or playing with your pet for a few minutes will help you with chilling out at the end of the day.

## ENJOY A CUP OF TEA

This old-fashioned stress remedy lowers the level of the stress hormone cortisol. Instead of mindlessly gulping down a mug-full in front of your computer, take 5 minutes to brew a fresh cup of your favorite tea while sipping it mindfully. Black tea and herbal tea both are great choices for this routine!

## TAKE MAGNESIUM

Magnesium is a fundamental nutrient that needs to be in balance with each other in order for you to fully experience good health and keep your body functioning properly. As the enabler of muscle relaxation, magnesium helps prevent and alleviate many health complaints such as headaches, constipation, cramps, and more. Magnesium helps to balance the body's pH levels as well as flush out excess knot-causing lactic acid buildup accumulated in the muscles.

## DE-CLUTTER

Take 5-10 minutes during the week to sort through the clutter on and around your personal space, and throw away any papers or knick-knacks that no longer serve a purpose. Digitally upload what you need to refer back to. You'll feel a whole lot lighter afterwards. Clutter and hoarding is "life plaque", adding unnecessary stress to your life. Replace clutter and meaningless items with a zen houseplant instead!

## GET A HOBBY

Keeping your hands busy settles your mind. Just ask any knitter. Summertime activities that require repetitive motion, such as barbecuing (place burger on grill, flip, serve, repeat) or gardening (dig, plant, water, repeat), lowers blood pressure and heart rate. Doing a craft can increase creativity and make you feel great!

## READ A BOOK

Getting lost in a great story can increase creativity, increase happiness, and reduce stress. Not a fan of reading? Try listening to an audiobook while driving or in earphones. Self-help books can increase productivity, get your thoughts organized, help you set goals, and improve mental clarity. Bonus points for basking in nature at the same time!

## FORGIVE SOMEONE

Let go of a past grudge and allow yourself the freedom of not holding on to negative emotions anymore. It will help lift a mountain off your shoulders. As Nelson Mandela said, "Resentment is like drinking poison and then hoping it will kill your enemies."

## SPARK SOME SCENTS

The National Association of Holistic Aromatherapy defines aromatherapy as "the art and science of utilizing naturally extracted aromatic essences from plants to balance, harmonize and promote the health of body, mind and spirit." Aromatherapy can reduce anxiety, ease depression, boost energy levels, speed up the healing process, eliminate headaches, boost cognitive performance, induce sleep, strengthen the immune system, reduce pain, improve digestion, and increase circulation.

## MEDIA DETOX

The average person will spend about 16 hours a day consuming media — including TV, social media & phone time. Still, researchers have found that smart phones actually increase stress. People often compare their “behind-the-scenes” to everyone else’s highlight reels on social media. Lowering stress can be as easy as clicking a button — or rather, turning off your digital devices. If the thought of ditching your cell phone makes you break into a cold sweat, it might be time for a mini-media detox. You don’t have to give up your cell phone, TV time or Instagram habit forever either. Instead, start small with a cell phone-free weekend, skip social media for a day or ditch the TV for an evening. The world is not going to end because you unplugged for a bit.

## SERIOUSLY, TURN OFF YOUR PHONE

Smartphones, in particular, are linked to increased stress, as more and more people feel pressure to respond to messages at all times. Use this time to spend with your loved ones without always looking at your phone, read a book, enjoy a nice meal, or take a walk.

## ADULT COLORING BOOKS

Coloring is promoted frequently as a type of art therapy that people can indulge in to shed themselves of worries and anxieties. You can’t really go wrong when coloring. Coloring gives people an outlet for expression and creativity. Use coloring as a chance to step out of our environment and into another world.

## SAY NO

Say no. You can do anything, but not everything. Saying no to something means saying YES to yourself. Will saying no enhance your life in somehow? Will saying no free up some well-needed time for yourself and family? Remember, you aren’t obligated to say yes to everyone and everything. Overwhelming yourself can and will lead to unnecessary stress that could have been avoided to start with.

## PAY IT FORWARD

Good karma and less stress? WIN!

Pay for the person in line behind you. Clean out all your old clothes and donate them to someone in need. Write a positive review about a local business you love. Give words of encouragement to someone about their dreams, no matter how big or small they are. Hug a friend— Let them know how important they are. Send a handwritten card to someone you know, unexpectedly. Leave encouraging post-it notes in library books and other random places. When someone wants to repay you for something, ask them to pay it forward.

## NECK TENSION RELEASE

Place your thumbs behind your head at the spots just behind the ears where the neck connects to the head. With your elbows bent, push your fingers toward and away from one another and bend your head back and forth, creating a rubbing movement on the base of the skull. Do this for 30 seconds, or until you feel yourself loosening up. This is a great trick for releasing tension headaches too!

## PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION

- Lie on your back in a comfortable position. Allow your arms to rest at your sides, palms down, on the surface next to you.
- Inhale and exhale slowly and deeply.
- Clench your hands into fists and hold them tightly for 15 seconds. As you do this, relax the rest of your body. Visualize your fists contracting, becoming tighter and tighter. Then let your hands relax.
- Now, tense and relax the following parts of your body in this order: face, shoulders, back, stomach, pelvis, legs, feet, and toes. Hold each part tensed for 15 seconds and then relax your body for 30 seconds before going on to the next part.
- Finish the exercise by shaking your hands and imagining the remaining tension flowing out of your fingertips.