

Two Minutes to DeStress

By

Margaret Wehrenberg, author of The 10 Best Ever Anxiety Management Techniques

If you are stressed, fighting against the inevitable toll it takes is something you can do with 5 simple two minute interventions.

1. Breathe I know we all think this is too simple but it works! What makes it work is to take very even, slow breaths in through the nose and out through the mouth with a longer exhale than the inhale. You might even count to be sure the exhale is longer or just say these words in your mind, “Now I breathe in all that is of peace. Now I breathe out all that is not of peace,” and let your breathe follow along. This stimulates your whole body to calm down.

2. Stretch Just as a racer at the starting line tightens muscles to spring into action, so stress causes your body to tighten up. Your brain is telling your body that it needs to *respond!* And all your muscles tighten to take action. But stress does not know that you are sitting at a desk! So every hour or two, stretch your arms over your head, bend, touch your toes. Stretch your legs in front of you and pull your toes up and then point them down. For a few minutes, let every muscle get a stretch to counteract the tightening that is inevitable if you are under stress.

3. Go on vacation Think about an experience you have had in which you felt your five senses were thoroughly engaged: a wonderful meal, a beautiful place or a time in which you felt exceptionally delighted. Now close your eyes breathe deeply and evenly and for two minutes re-experience that in all five of your senses. Let your mind dwell on what you saw, smelled, felt, heard and tasted. Take one very deep breath in through the nose and out through the mouth as you return to your work.

4. Laugh Laughing is a tremendous stress reliever: it loosens the physical tension of stress and it unites people in a delightful shared experience. American Norman Cousins found laughter to be healing and years later, Indian physician Madan Kataria started laughter yoga in Mumbai, India. Various studies have demonstrated that laughter is good for your health, energy and relieving stress and worry. There are many ways to increase the laughter in your life: play with a small child, or get together with friends whom you enjoy. But if you only have two minutes, view your favorite funny YouTube or movie clip. Laughter will lighten your stress load.

5. Re-Fuel Your body needs water and it needs energy. Take the time in a busy day to drink enough liquids. Herbal teas or water are good choices, and any beverage will help with keeping you hydrated, but try to keep caffeine consumption low if you are really stressed out. Your brain is already pumping out neurochemicals to get you aroused, so you don’t need more from caffeinated drinks.