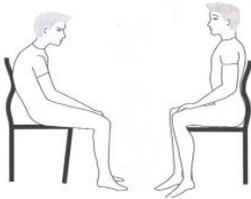


## Strategies for Stress Relief and Relaxation

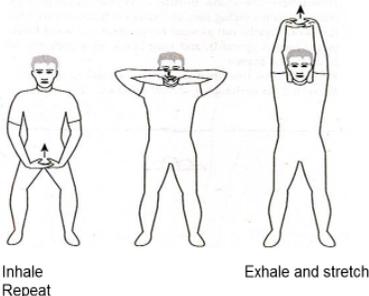
1. Take a really deep breath. Gather your worries, hopes and dreams and inhale. Hold for 2-3 seconds. Exhale slowly and release.
2. Practice positive sitting – you'll feel better if you do!



3. Remember the 4 S's:
  1. **S**mile and make your eyes twinkle.
  2. Let your jaw hang **s**lack.
  3. Let your shoulders **s**ink down.
  4. **S**mooth out your forehead.

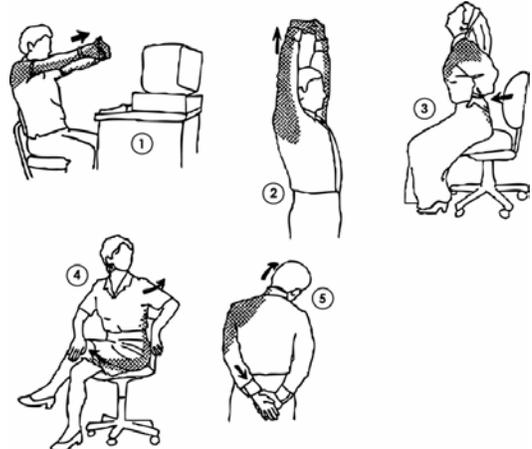
4. Practice the calming flow.

### The Calming Flow



5. Do a one-minute body scan. Notice everything there is to notice.
6. Try a do-it-yourself massage: a) cup your eyes, b) with the third finger of both hands, gently press horizontally across your forehead, eyebrows, and cheekbones. Use a circular motion on your temples. Press all the way around your mouth. Gently pull your earlobes. Create press points in lines across your scalp. Try massaging your neck and shoulder on one side with the opposite hand.

7. Perform some feel-good moves at your desk.



8. Take a 60-second visualization break.

Imagine:

- lying on a Caribbean beach.
- floating on a raft in a beautiful swimming pool.
- lying in front of a fire in a cozy cabin in a winter wonderland.
- soaking in a hot tub.
- walking in a cathedral-like forest by a peaceful stream.

9. Meditate. Experiment with mindfulness of breathing, breath counting, a healing mantra.

10. Silently repeat the mettās for loving-kindness:

- may I be healthy and strong
- may I be happy and peaceful
- may I be free from inner and outer harm
- may I take care of myself with wisdom, love, joy, and compassion

11. Cultivate appreciation and gratitude. For 60 seconds, fill in the blanks with as many things as you can. "I am grateful for . . . . I really appreciate . . . . I'm so glad that . . . ."

## A Daily Program for Stress Relief

1. Begin each day with a peaceful wake-up call. Take a few moments to become aware of your breathing, and practice a few deep, abdominal breaths. Bring your attention to each part of your body. Repeat any affirmations you may be working on. Set your intention for the day.

Remember the quote from Thich Nhat Hanh:

*“Waking up this morning, I smile. Twenty-four brand new hours are before me. I vow to live fully in each moment and to look at each being with eyes of compassion.”*

2. Breathe deeply every hour for 1-3 minutes while doing a Body Scan and repeating appropriate affirmations.

Examples:

- “My mind, body, and emotions are at peace.”
- “I am calm and centered.”
- “I accept myself in this moment without judgment.”
- “I am creating everything I need for my well-being.”
- “I look forward to my life with joy.”

3. Move! Get in as much physical activity as possible!
4. Choose healthful foods.
5. Do some sort of meditation/prayer/relaxation every day.
6. End your day with a peaceful Go-to-bed-ritual. Example: With the TV off, sink into your bed and appreciating everything you like about your bed and noticing how comfortable you feel. Breathing deeply, squeeze and relax various muscles, allowing your body to feel very heavy. Repeat some peaceful affirmations such as, “*I am safe, warm, and comfortable. I will rest deeply and awake refreshed. All is well.*”

