

QuickTakes



Ways To Relax

Breathing, talking, laughing - some of the simplest ways to relax are also the most effective.

1. Have a Laugh.

Look for the humor in stressful situations. Laughter relaxes muscles, lowers blood pressure and eases mental tension.

2. Make Realistic Plans.

Don't make dinner plans across town for 6 p.m. when you know getting stuck in traffic always leaves you frazzled and annoyed. Think ahead when making plans.

3. The Pause That Refreshes.

Make mini-breaks part of your daily routine. Sit down and get comfortable. Take a deep breath, hold it, and then exhale very slowly. At the same time, let your shoulder muscles drop.

4. Count to 10.

It's good to acknowledge anger. But let yourself cool down before you yell, rant or rave.

Your Stress Questions Answered

From why we feel it to the effects on your health, learn the basics about stress. If you know more about it, you might find it easier to avoid in the future!

What Is Stress?

"Anytime we are faced with something our minds perceive as outside our ability to deal with easily, the body gears up to cope with it," explains psychologist Dr. Fred Luskin of the Stanford Forgiveness Project. "That is called the stress response."

Why Do We Experience Stress?

The stress response can be traced back to our cave-dwelling ancestors' "fight or flight" instincts. "The things that stress people out are the things that threaten our sense of survival," notes Dr. Andrew Elmore, a stress management expert at the Mt. Sinai School of Medicine. "If a tiger jumps out, your body gets this tremendous rush of energy. You use that extra energy to deal with the stressful stimulus." Nowadays, though, "survival contains a lot of ideas — your money, your career, your family and so on. And whenever you're worrying about something really important, your body still behaves as if your life were physically threatened."

What Are the Warning Signs of Excessive Stress?

Dr. Christian VanDenBerg, Director of the Executive Health Program at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida, lists the red flags, which include "headaches; grinding the teeth; pain in the shoulders, neck and back; chronic fatigue or insomnia; sexual dysfunction; upset stomach or heartburn; frequent colds and flus; anxiety and depression; frequent anger or irritability; poor concentration or forgetfulness; overeating; or increased smoking, drinking or drug use." Two or more of these can signal that you need to work on managing stress.

Who Gets Stressed?

From CEOs to parents to students, "anybody can be stressed, across the gamut," says Dr. Hogan Bruen. If you're experiencing the symptoms above, don't brush them off because you're not going through a major crisis. "Take a stress inventory of what's going on in your life" suggests Dr. VanDenBerg. "Low-level situational stresses like commuting stress, under productive work meetings, too many commitments, family arguments — the little things add up." If your symptoms don't improve after you try out basic stress reduction tactics, consult a doctor. In serious cases, Dr. VanDenBerg points out, "feelings of stress may be a symptom of anxiety or depression rather than the other way around."

So Are Our Bodies Just Hard-Wired For Burnout?

Quite the contrary. The sympathetic nervous system is designed to respond to emergency situations (think back to that tiger) with "fight or flight" signals. But we also have a built-in, chill-out mechanism called the Parasympathetic Nervous System, which, as yoga instructor Cathy Calderon puts it, cues us to "rest and digest." In other words, just as car horns and co-workers may send your body into stress mode, signals like deep breathing and muscle release can tell your body that it's chill-out time. Once we learn stress management tools, we can spend a lot less time in crisis mode: "The good news is, we're not just victims of stress — we're actually biologically wired to de-stress and be happy and joyous."

Depression: Does This Sound Like You?

Depression is not something that you have “made up in your head.” It’s more than just feeling “down in the dumps” or “blue” for a few days. Its feeling “down” and “low” and “hopeless” for weeks at a time.

About 19 million Americans suffer from depression. It can happen to anyone, no matter what age you are or where you come from. Depression can make it very hard for you to care for yourself, your family or even hold down a steady job. But, there is hope. Depression can be treated and you can feel better.

What Causes Depression?

You may want to know why you feel “depressed.” There may be several causes:

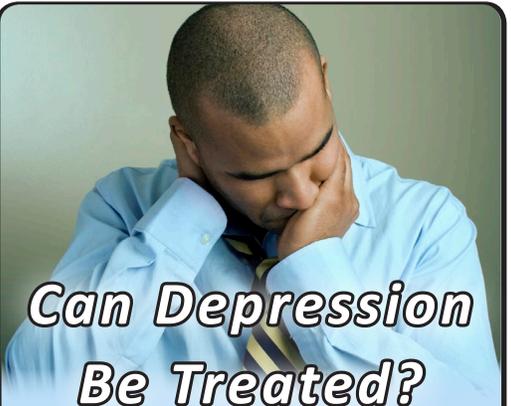
- Depression may happen because of chemical changes in your brain.
- Depression runs in some families. This means that someone in your family such as a grandparent, parent, aunt, uncle, cousin, sister or brother may suffer from depression as well.
- Sometimes painful events or losses such as a death can lead to depression.
- Keep in mind, sometimes the cause of depression is not clear.

Look For Signs of Depression.

Read the following list. Put a check mark next to those that sound like you:

- I am really sad most of the time.
- I don’t enjoy doing the things I’ve always enjoyed doing.
- I don’t sleep well at night and am very restless.
- I am always tired. I find it hard to get out of bed.
- I don’t feel like eating much.
- I have lots of aches and pains that don’t go away.
- I find it hard to focus and am very forgetful.
- I am mad at everybody and everything.
- I feel upset and fearful, but can’t figure out why.
- I don’t feel like talking to people.
- I don’t like myself very much. I feel bad most of the time.

If you checked several boxes, call your doctor. Take the list to show the doctor. You may need to get a checkup and find out if you have depression.



Can Depression Be Treated?

Without a doubt! If an individual seeks competent care, depression is highly treatable. In a time of crisis, the emergency room at a hospital may be able to provide temporary care and then they will refer you to a specialist for further help. Here is a list of types of people and places that will make a referral or provide services:

- Family Doctors
- Mental Health Specialists, such as Psychiatrists, Psychologists, Social Workers or Mental Health Counselors
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs)
- Community Mental Health Centers
- State Hospital Outpatient Clinics
- Social Service Agencies
- Private Clinics

Banana Bread with Cranberries

Makes: one loaf, 12 slices | 60 minutes



Tart fresh cranberries balance the sweetness of the bananas in this favorite quick bread.

Ingredients:

- 1-1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 cup whole-wheat flour
- 1/2 cup packed brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/8 teaspoon salt
- 2 large, very ripe bananas
- 2 tablespoons unsweetened applesauce
- 1/3 cup low-fat milk
- 2 large egg whites
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon grated orange or lemon zest
- 1 cup fresh cranberries

Preparation:

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Spray a 4x8-inch loaf pan with cooking spray.
2. In a mixing bowl, whisk together all-purpose flour, whole wheat flour, sugar, baking soda, baking powder and salt.
3. In a food processor, puree bananas and applesauce. Add milk, eggs, vanilla extract and citrus zest. Pulse to mix.
4. Combine dry ingredients and banana mixture with a few quick stirs. Do not over mix. Stir in cranberries. Scrape batter into the prepared loaf pan.
5. Bake for 1 hour or until a skewer inserted into the center of loaf comes out clean.

Nutritional Information (per serving):

143 Calories; 0.4g Fat; 0.1g Saturated fat; 3g Protein; 33g Carbohydrate; 2.1g Fiber; 168mg Sodium