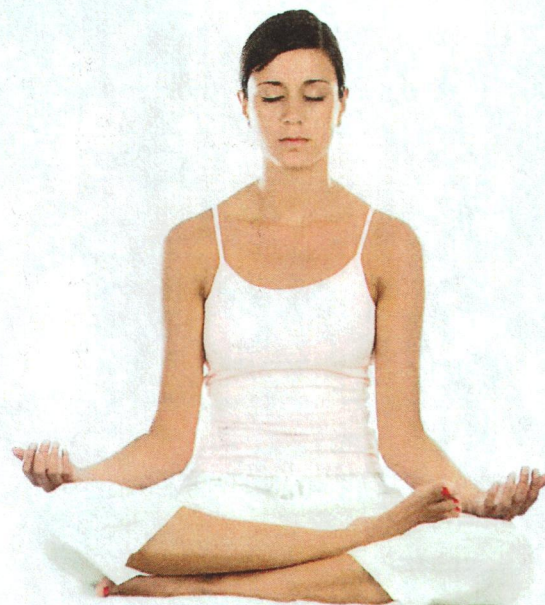


# MEDITATION

Meditation is anything we do to quiet our brains automatic reactions and bring about a calm, present-focused awareness. The benefits of meditation are manifold because it can reverse your stress response, thereby shielding you from the effects of chronic stress. When practicing meditation, your heart rate and breathing slow down, your blood pressure normalizes, you use oxygen more efficiently, and you sweat less. Your adrenal glands produce less cortisol, your mind ages at a slower rate, and your immune function improves. Your mind also clears and your creativity increases. People who meditate regularly find it easier to give up life-damaging habits like smoking, drinking and drugs. Meditation research is still new, but promising. There are many ways to meditate, but the table below lists the four most common methods.



Method	What is it?
Breath Focus	Focusing on slow, deep breathing and gently disengaging the mind from distracting thoughts and sensations
Body Scan	Focusing on one part of the body or group of muscles at a time and mentally releasing any physical tension you feel there
Guided Imagery	Using pleasing mental images to help you relax and focus
Mindfulness	Breathing deeply while staying in the moment by deliberately focusing on thoughts and sensations that arise during the meditation

## **HelpGuide.org: Relaxation Techniques for Stress Relief**

<http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/relaxation-techniques-for-stress-relief.htm>

## **About Health: The Benefits of Meditation for Stress Management**

<http://stress.about.com/od/tension tamers/p/profilemeditati.htm>

## **Mayo Clinic: Meditation: A Simple Fast Way to Reduce Stress**

<http://www.mayoclinic.org/tests-procedures/meditation/in-depth/meditation/art-20045858>

## **Harvard Health Publications: Mindfulness Meditation May Ease Anxiety, Mental Stress**

<http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/mindfulness-meditation-may-ease-anxiety-mental-stress-201401086967>

## **Web MD: Meditation, Stress and Your Health**

<http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/meditation-natural-remedy-for-insomnia>



# JUST BREATHE!

Breathing deeply in and out for just one minute can help to refresh your mind and reset your body. Harvard University research in the 1970s conducted by Dr. Herbert Benson found that short periods of meditation that focused on the breath had the power to alter the body's stress responses, activating the "relaxation response." Controlled breathing can cause physiological changes that include:

- lowered blood pressure and heart rate
- reduced levels of stress hormones in the blood
- reduced lactic acid build-up in muscle tissue
- balanced levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood
- improved immune system functioning
- increased physical energy
- increased feelings of calm and wellbeing.

Sit comfortably and raise your ribcage to expand your chest. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen. Take notice of how your upper chest and abdomen are moving while you breathe. Concentrate on your breath and try to gently breathe in and out through the nose. Your upper chest and stomach should be still, allowing the diaphragm to work more efficiently with your abdomen rather than your chest.

## **Time Healthland: 6 Breathing Exercises to Relax in 10 Minutes or Less**

<http://healthland.time.com/2012/10/08/6-breathing-exercises-to-relax-in-10-minutes-or-less/>

## **Better Health Channel: Breathing to Reduce Stress**

[http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Breathing\\_to\\_reduce\\_stress](http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Breathing_to_reduce_stress)

## **Alberta Health: Belly Breathing (Diaphragmatic Breathing)**

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/health/pages/conditions.aspx?hwId=aa141579>

1. Stand, sit or lie down comfortably in a quiet place.



2. Close your eyes and loosen any tense muscles. Make sure to relax your shoulders.



3. Place one hand on your upper chest and another on your belly button.



4. Breathe in slowly through your nose for *three seconds*. Feel your stomach expand. Your chest should remain still.



5. Breathe out slowly through your mouth for *three seconds*. Feel your stomach move back.



6. Repeat steps 4 and 5. Gradually increase the time you take to breathe in and out.

Four seconds in and four seconds out, five seconds in and five seconds out.....



# NUTRITION ALLIES FOR STRESS RELIEF

**B vitamins:** These help the body cope with stress (build your metabolism) and control the whole nervous system. Required for proper neurological function, DNA synthesis, and the production of red blood cells, which prevent anemia.

**Proteins:** Assist in growth and tissue repair. Contain serotonin boosters that help relieve depression.

**A & E vitamins:** Essential for normal vision. Bolsters immune system.

**C vitamins:** Protection of the immune system (antioxidants, diabetes protection etc.). Lowers the amount of cortisol in your body.

**Magnesium: & Zinc** Needed for a variety of tasks such as muscle relaxation, fatty acid formation, making new cells and heartbeat regulation. Too little magnesium may trigger headaches and fatigue, compounding the effects of stress.

**Complex Carbs:** Prompt the brain to make more serotonin. Complex carbs can also help you feel balanced by stabilizing blood sugar levels.

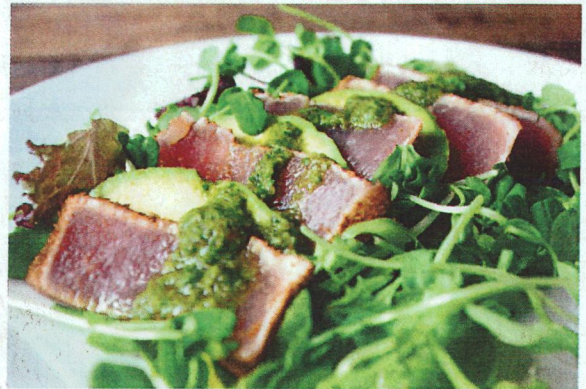
**Omega 3 Fatty Acids:** Prevents surges in stress hormones and adrenaline levels. Omega-3 fatty acids, found in fish such as salmon and tuna, can prevent surges in stress hormones and may help protect against heart disease, depression, and premenstrual syndrome (PMS).

**Potassium:** Helps lower blood pressure.

**Vitamin D & Calcium:** Relieve tense muscles, help fight fatigue and depression. Research shows that calcium eases anxiety and mood swings linked to PMS.

**Iron:** Essential for the formation of hemoglobin, which carries oxygen to the blood, and myoglobin, which stores oxygen in muscles – both necessary to prevent fatigue.

**Fiber:** Helps maintain healthy heart and elimination system.



Some great foods to try when you are stressed include **asparagus, avocados, berries, cashews, chamomile or green tea, dark chocolate, garlic, oatmeal, oysters, walnuts, Swiss chard, salmon, tuna, carrots, milk, yogurt, unsweetened whole grain or rice cereals, and whole grain breads or pretzels.**

**Stress Management Society: Nutritional Stress & Health**

<http://www.stress.org.uk/Diet-and-nutrition.aspx>

**WebMD: Foods that Help Tame Stress**

<http://www.webmd.com/diet/ss/slideshow-diet-for-stress-management>

**Prevention: 13 Foods that Fight Stress**

<http://www.prevention.com/mind-body/emotional-health/13-healthy-foods-reduce-stress-and-depression>

**Better Homes & Gardens: 10 Super Foods for Stress relief**

<http://www.bhg.com/health-family/mind-body-spirit/natural-remedies/superfoods-for-stress-relief/>



# STRESS-INCREASING FOOD VILLAINS

**Huffington Post: Food And Stress: 8 Of The Worst Picks For When You're Feeling Anxious**

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/07/worst-foods-stress\\_n\\_2773760.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/03/07/worst-foods-stress_n_2773760.html)

There are a number of unhealthy ways to cope with pressure and anxiety, but "stress eating" candy and chips -- or turning to alcohol and energy drinks -- might just take the proverbial cake. Paradoxically, when dealing with stress, the body frequently craves precisely the foods that will exacerbate the condition most.

"When they're stressed, people go naturally to the wrong foods because they increase levels of [the stress hormone] cortisol," Heather Bauer, R.D., founder of Bestowed.com told the Huffington Post. "People tend to crave foods that are high in fat, sugar and salt because those directly increase our cortisol levels."

## Top Foods to Avoid

Energy Drinks  
Candy & Gum  
Pastries  
Alcohol  
Chips / Bagged Snack Foods  
Coffee  
Fried Foods

**NOT ENERGIZING!**



## Lifehacker: Reduce Stress-Induced Junk Food Cravings with a 15-Minute Walk

<http://lifehacker.com/reduce-stress-induced-junk-food-cravings-with-a-15-minu-1691780104#>



When you're stressed out, junk food starts to look even more tempting than usual. A recent study found that going for a quick walk as soon as those cravings hit can help you keep things under control, even if the treats are right in front of you.

The study, led by Larissa Ledochowski of the University of Innsbruck in Austria and Adrian H. Taylor of Plymouth University in the UK, and published in the journal *PLOS ONE*, suggests that a little basic exercise can drastically reduce the chances you'll reach for a candy bar. The study's participants—all identified as overweight individuals—engaged in stressful activity after a three-day abstinence from sugary snacks. Half of them was asked to go for a brisk, 15-minute walk before engaging in the stressful activities. The other half did no such activity, and then both groups were asked to handle some unwrapped, sugary snacks and try to resist them.

Ledochowski and Taylor's results suggested that individuals who engaged in the walk beforehand were far less likely to indulge in the junk food. If you're feeling stressed and the allure of sweet treats is getting too strong, a walk might help you out. You're taking your mind off of the snacks, alleviating and preventing stress with a little exercise, and a walk is always good for you anyway.



# STRESS-BUSTING ONE DAY MENU

## Breakfast

### Start-the-Day Smoothie

#### Ingredients

1 cup coconut or almond milk  
1/2 cup fresh juice  
1 banana  
1/2 cup frozen blueberries  
1/2 avocado  
1 tablespoon raw cacao powder  
1 tablespoon of flaxseed  
2 handfuls of baby spinach

#### Directions

Place all ingredients in a high-speed blender and blend until smooth.



## Snack

### Super-Healthy Bran & Fruit Muffins

#### Ingredients

1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour  
3/4 cup ground flax seed  
3/4 cup oat bran  
1 cup brown sugar  
2 teaspoons baking soda  
1 teaspoon baking powder  
1 teaspoon salt  
2 teaspoons ground cinnamon  
3/4 cup milk  
2 eggs, beaten  
1 teaspoon vanilla extract  
2 tablespoons coconut oil  
2 cups shredded carrots  
2 apples, peeled, shredded  
Blackberries or blueberries  
1 cup chopped mixed nuts

#### Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease muffin pan or line with paper muffin liners.

In a large bowl, mix together flour, flax seed, oat bran, brown sugar, baking soda, baking powder, salt and cinnamon. Add the milk, eggs, vanilla and oil; mix until just blended. Stir in the carrots, apples, raisins and nuts.

Fill prepared muffin cups 2/3 full with batter.

Bake at 350 F (175 degrees C) for 15 to 20 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean.



# STRESS-BUSTING ONE DAY MENU

## Lunch

### Pan-Seared Tuna with Avocado, Soy, Ginger, and Lime

#### Ingredients

2 big handfuls fresh cilantro leaves, chopped  
1/2 jalapeno, sliced  
1 teaspoon grated fresh ginger  
1 garlic clove, grated  
2 limes, juiced  
2 tablespoons soy sauce  
Pinch sugar  
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper  
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil  
1 (6-ounce) block sushi-quality tuna  
1 ripe avocado, halved, peeled, pitted, sliced

#### Directions

In a mixing bowl, combine the cilantro, jalapeno, ginger, garlic, lime juice, soy sauce, sugar, salt, pepper, and 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Stir the ingredients together until well incorporated.

Place a skillet over medium-high heat and coat with the remaining 2 tablespoons of olive oil. Season the tuna generously with salt and pepper. Lay the tuna in the hot oil and sear for 1 minute on each side to form a slight crust.

Pour 1/2 of the cilantro mixture into the pan to coat the fish.

Serve the seared tuna with the sliced avocado and the remaining cilantro sauce drizzled over the whole plate.

Recipe courtesy of Tyler Florence  
<http://www.foodnetwork.com/recipes/tyler-florence/pan-seared-tuna-with-avocado-soy-ginger-and-lime-recipe.html#!?oc=linkback>

## Dinner

### Spinach Lasagna

#### Ingredients

12 whole wheat lasagna noodles  
8 ounces button mushrooms, chopped  
1 onion, chopped  
4 cloves garlic, minced  
2 tablespoons olive oil  
2 cans (14.5 ounces each) diced tomatoes  
2 cans (15 ounces each) tomato sauce  
1 bag fresh spinach leaves  
1 tablespoon dried basil  
1 table spoon dried oregano  
Salt & Pepper to taste  
1 container (16 oz) ricotta cheese  
1 container (16 oz) parmesan cheese  
5 cups shredded mozzarella cheese

#### Directions

Preheat the oven to 375°F. Coat a 13"x 9" baking dish with cooking spray.

Prepare the noodles according to the package directions. Drain.

Cook the onion, and garlic in the oil in a medium saucepan over medium-high heat for 7 to 10 minutes or until soft. Add the tomatoes, tomato sauce, and Italian seasoning. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low; simmer for 15 minutes.

In a separate pan, stir fry mushrooms in a bit of olive oil for a few minutes. Add the spinach leaves, stir fry for about 30 seconds and then remove from heat.

Place half of the noodles in the prepared baking dish. Spread with half of the ricotta cheese. Sprinkle with 2 cups of the mozzarella and parmesan. Cover with half the mushroom and spinach mixture. Cover with half of the tomato mixture. Repeat.

Cover and bake for 30 minutes. Uncover and sprinkle with the remaining cheese. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes or until hot in the center.



# HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS

**Lemon balm:** Several small studies have found that this supplement, which is part of the mint family, can improve mood and induce feelings of calmness. One study found that 1,600 milligrams of dried lemon balm was associated with an increase in calmness for up to six hours, he said. Lemon balm also appears to be relatively safe.

**Chamomile:** If you have a jittery moment, a cup of chamomile tea might help calm you down. Some compounds in chamomile (*Matricaria recutita*) bind to the same brain receptors as drugs like Valium. You can also take it as a supplement, typically standardized to contain 1.2% apigenin (an active ingredient), along with dried chamomile flowers.

**L-theanine (or green tea):** Research shows that L-theanine helps curb a rising heart rate and blood pressure, and a few small human studies have found that it reduces anxiety. In one study, anxiety-prone subjects were calmer and more focused during a test if they took 200 milligrams of L-theanine beforehand. You can get that much L-theanine from green tea, but you'll have to drink many cups—as few as five, as many as 20.

**Valerian:** Some herbal supplements reduce anxiety without making you sleepy (such as L-theanine), while others are sedatives. Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*) is squarely in the second category. It is a sleep aid, for insomnia. It contains sedative compounds; the German government has approved it as a treatment for sleep problems.

**Passionflower:** It's a sedative; the German government has approved it for nervous restlessness. Some studies find that it can reduce symptoms of anxiety as effectively as prescription drugs. It's often used for insomnia. Like other sedatives, it can cause sleepiness and drowsiness, so don't take it, or other sedative herbs, when you are taking prescription sedatives.

**Licorice Root:** It contains a natural hormone alternative to cortisone, which can help the body handle stressful situations, and can help to normalize blood sugar levels as well as your adrenal glands, providing you with the energy necessary to deal with the stressful situation at hand. Some claim licorice stimulates cranial and cerebrospinal fluid, thereby calming the mind.

**St. John's Wort:** Though it presents itself as an unassuming, flowering perennial, St. John's Wort was shown to be more effective than Prozac, according to a recent study, in treating major depressive disorders. St. John's Wort is most often taken as a capsule or tablet. It is often combined with valerian root when insomnia or restlessness are accompanying symptoms.

**Skullcap:** Skullcap has sedative, tonic, and anti-inflammatory properties. Many people use the natural sedative properties of skullcap to fight insomnia, restlessness, rapid heartbeat, and even depression. It should be taken as directed, and should not be used by pregnant women.

**Live Science: The Truth about Herbal Remedies for Stress**  
<http://www.livescience.com/16975-herbal-supplements-stress-reduction.html>

**Calm Clinic: Natural & Herbal Anxiety Remedies**  
<http://www.calmclinic.com/anxiety/natural-herbal-remedies>

**Care2: 5 Herbs that Reduce Stress & Anxiety**  
<http://www.care2.com/greenliving/5-herbs-that-reduce-stress-and-anxiety.html>

**Check with your doctor before taking herbal supplements to ensure they do not interact negatively with other medications!**



# ESSENTIAL OILS

The part of the brain that processes smells is located in close proximity to that which governs emotion and memory, so scent can be a powerful way to induce pleasant emotions and calm the mind. Essential oils can be particularly effective – according to a 2008 study published in *Holistic Nursing Practice*, essential oils actually reduced stress perception in nurses working in intensive care unit settings. Try keeping ylang ylang, peppermint or lavender essential oils at your desk and applying a small amount on the skin when you start feeling stressed. Some of the most common oils used for relaxation include

**Lavender**  
**Frankincense**  
**Rose**  
**Vanilla**  
**Chamomile**  
**Ylang Ylang**  
**Geranium**  
**Sandalwood**

## Relaxing Essential Oil Recipes

### Relaxing Bath

2 drops bergamot oil

1 drop petitgrain oil

Add oils directly to the bath and stir to distribute.

You can enjoy this bath daily.

### Relaxing Massage Oil

10 drops lavender oil

6 drops chamomile oil

4 drops ylang ylang oil

4 drops sandalwood oil (expensive, so optional)

2 ounces vegetable oil

Combine ingredients. Use as a massage oil as needed, or add 1 or 2 teaspoons to your bath or 1 teaspoon to a footbath. To add sophistication and an extra lift to this blend, add 1 drop of neroli essential oil. For children less than 8 years of age, use half the quantity of essential oil recommended. Without the vegetable oil, this combination can be used in an aromatherapy diffuser, simmering pan of water, or a potpourri cooker, or you can add it to 2 ounces of water for an air spray. Use daily and as often as you like.

### A Calming Diffuser Blend

Lavender - 18 drops

Rosewood- 15 drops

Roman Chamomile - 12 drops

Geranium - 12 drops

Clary Sage - 10 drops

Ylang Ylang - 10 drops

Marjoram - 8 drops

Blend into a small glass container and shake well. Add to your favorite diffuser.



### Wellbeing.com: 15 Essential Oils for Stress Relief

<http://www.wellbeing.com.au/blog/15-essential-oils-for-stress-relief/>

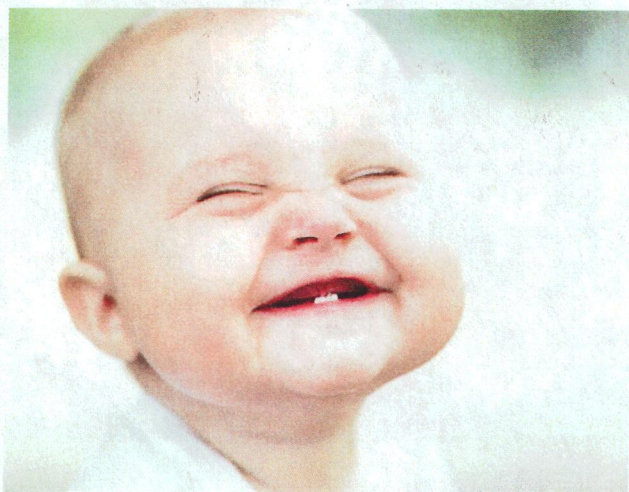
### Mental Health Daily: Aromatherapy: 9 Best Essential Oils For Anxiety and Stress

<http://mentalhealthdaily.com/2014/02/25/aromatherapy-9-best-essential-oils-for-anxiety-and-stress/>



## Listen to Music

Research has shown that music has a profound effect on your body and psyche. In fact, there's a growing field of health care known as music therapy, which uses music to heal. Those who practice music therapy are finding a benefit in using music to help cancer patients, children with ADD, and others, and even hospitals are beginning to use music and music therapy to help with pain management, to help ward off depression, to promote movement, to calm patients, to ease muscle tension, and for many other benefits that music and music therapy can bring. This is not surprising, as music affects the body and mind in many powerful ways.



## Laugh

A good sense of humor can't cure all ailments, but data is mounting about the positive things laughter can do. When you start to laugh, it doesn't just lighten your load mentally, it actually induces physical changes in your body. Laughter enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, and increases the endorphins that are released by your brain.

Laughter can activate and relieve your stress response. A rollicking laugh fires up and then cools down your stress response and increases your heart rate and blood pressure. The result? A good, relaxed feeling. Laughter can also stimulate circulation and aid muscle relaxation, both of which help reduce some of the physical symptoms of stress.

## Dance

The free motion and stretching movements of dance can help to release tension from the body and lift your spirits. Exercise in any form can act as a stress reliever by pumping up endorphins, according to the Mayo Clinic, and dancing can be a particularly enjoyable way to blow off steam for many people. Put a favorite song on your headphones, step away from the computer, and let loose for a minute -- it's almost guaranteed to boost your mood.

## Other Stress-Relieving Activities

- Stepping away from technology
- Being in nature
- Adding plants to your space
- Seeing your best friend
- Taking a short walk
- Spending time with animals
- Hobbies
- Hugs & Kisses
- Massage
- Hot Baths

