

## 26 Ways to Relieve Stress During Coronavirus

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### 1. **Breathe Deeply**

Any yogi knows that the breath — known as *pranayama* or “life force” — plays an important role in nourishing the body and medical researchers agree. Being anxious causes a “Stress Response” in your body – stimulates the Sympathetic Nervous System, causes shallow breathing, higher blood pressure and a faster heart rate. But our bodies also have a “Relaxation Response”. Breathing Exercises can activate that “Relaxation Response”. Even just taking a few deep breaths can slow your breathing, reduce blood pressure, reduce tension and stimulate the Parasympathetic Nervous System, which helps us to calm down.

Google “breathing exercises to reduce stress” to find specific breathing exercises to reduce stress quickly and promote sleep.

### 2. **Visualize, Guided Meditation**

A short visualization is an easy way to get back to center. Even the National Institute for Health recognizes the power of “guided imagery” to elicit a relaxation response. Simply make yourself comfortable and then try to picture a peaceful scene: a future vacation, your favorite beach, a place in the mountains, forest or anywhere in Nature.

There are many types of “guided meditations” available online and finding the type of meditation best for you is a personal preference. Google “guided meditation” to find many choices.

### 3. **Progressive Muscle Relaxation**

Start with your toes and work your way up: tighten your foot muscles as much as you can, then relax them; tighten your ankle muscles as much as you can, then relax them. Make your way up your body, tightening and relaxing each muscle until you’ve finished with your face. It may seem silly, but this practice can help reduce anxiety and stress and is often recommended to patients who suffer from depression and anxiety disorders.

It might be fun to try with your children!

### 4. **Try This Naam Yoga Hand Trick**

Applying pressure to the space between your second and third knuckle (the joints at the base of your pointer and middle fingers) can help to create a sense of instant calm. It activates a nerve that loosens the area around the heart and reduces feelings of anxiety. The fleshy place between your index finger and thumb is called the *hoku* spot in traditional Chinese medicine. Applying firm pressure there for just 30 seconds can reduce stress and tension in your upper body. So if you start to feel overwhelmed by current events, give your hand a squeeze and take a deep breath!

### 5. **Exercise**

Going for a brisk half-hour walk or run every day can make you feel better. Research has found that cardio exercise can lift your mood for up to 12 hours. Going for a walk will help to clear your head, boost endorphins and reduce cortisol. If you can, go for a walk in Nature. The rhythm and repetition of walking in Nature has a tranquilizing effect on your brain, which decreases anxiety and improves sleep. The whole family will benefit from a walk!

If you can’t be outdoors, take the stairs up and down a few flights, or do some stretching exercises like head rolls and shoulder shrugs. Just move!

There are so many exercise DVDs available for sale. You can also check online for exercise classes being offered by many health clubs which have closed temporarily due to the coronavirus..

6. **Yoga**

Many people begin practicing yoga as a way to cope with feelings of anxiety, to fight depression and promote quality sleep. There are so many other benefits of yoga such as reduction of chronic pain and inflammation and improving heart health. There are many yoga DVDS available for sale and many yoga studios are now offering their classes online.

7. **Essential Oils**

Researchers studying depression have found that certain citrus fragrances boost feelings of well-being and alleviate stress by upping levels of norepinephrine, a hormone that affects mood. For an all-day pick-me-up, dab a little lemon or orange essential oil on a handkerchief to tuck in your pocket. Lavender can be relaxing and help promote sleep. A vast array of essential oils is available to offer relief for many conditions. Your kids may benefit too. Check it out online or at your favorite health food store.

8. **Reach Out**

Your social network is one of your best tools for handling stress. Talk to others on the phone or FaceTime. Share what's going on. You can get a fresh perspective while keeping your connection strong. Friends aren't just fun — your closest friends can actually reduce your production of cortisol, according to a study of middle-school aged children in various stressful situations. Make sure your kids can stay connected to their friends.

9. **Play Some Music**

While classical music has a particularly soothing effect — it slows heart rate, lowers blood pressure and even decreases levels of stress hormones — any music that you love will flood your brain with feel-good neurochemicals like dopamine. Research shows that music is particularly beneficial in the midst of stressful events because it can relax blood vessels and increase blood flow. That not only calms you down but is good for your heart, too. Don't have your headphones handy? Try humming or making your own music. There are playlists of yoga music or nature sounds (like the ocean, a bubbling brook, birds chirping) which relieve stress. Or maybe you want to blow off steam by rocking out to your favorite rock n roll or singing at the top of your lungs. Get silly! Your kids might have a blast dancing with you!

10. **Say Cheese!**

Smiling is a two-way mechanism. We do it when we're relaxed and happy, but doing it can also make us feel relaxed and happy. Smiling transmits nerve impulses from the facial muscles to the limbic system, a key emotional center in the brain, tilting the neurochemical balance toward calm. Go ahead and grin. Don't you feel better already? You may change the mood in your household as well!

11. **Laugh**

A good belly laugh doesn't just lighten the load mentally. It enhances your intake of oxygen-rich air, stimulates your heart, lungs and muscles, lowers cortisol (your body's stress hormone) and boosts brain chemicals (endorphins) which help your mood. Lighten up by tuning in to whatever or whomever makes you smile. Steve Wilson (founder of the World Laughter Tour, an organization that offers therapeutic-laughter training) says that laughing helps immune cells function better.

12. **Chew A Piece Of Gum**

Chewing gum can relieve anxiety, improve alertness and reduce stress during times of multitasking, according to a 2008 study.

**13. Limit Screen Time**

Research has found that uninterrupted computer use, especially late at night, has been associated with stress, insomnia and depression. Make sure to take frequent breaks from computers and limit screen time for your kids. Try to shut off screens an hour before bedtime.

**14. Buy Yourself A Plant**

Houseplants aren't just beautiful air purifiers; they can actually help you calm down. Researchers have found that simply being around plants can induce your relaxation response. A study found that a group of stressed-out people who entered a room full of plants had a four-point drop in their blood pressure. Many open-air nurseries are still open during this time of social-distancing.

**15. Treat Yourself!**

Eating or drinking something sweet is soothing because it stems the production of the stress hormone, glucocorticoid (which helps explain why we find finishing off a bag of chips or pint of ice-cream when things go haywire). While not an excuse to unleash Emotional Eating, sometimes a little treat can help...especially for kids!

**16. Eat A Banana (Or A Potato!)**

Potassium helps to regulate blood pressure, which rises during times of stress. Some people find that eating a banana when they're feeling stressed can help improve energy. Research shows that potassium can protect your body from the negative effects of stress, like increased risk of heart attack and stroke.

**17. Have a cup of tea.**

Herbal teas containing lavender, valerian, passionflower and chamomile soothe and calm the nervous system. Many have found that chamomile tea reduces stress and anxiety and helps with insomnia. Peppermint and chamomile tea can help relax muscles and reduce irritability. Try a cup before bed!

**18. Get more rest.**

Stress builds when you're tired. Hitting the hay before 10:00 p.m. is the Ayurvedic recommendation for deeper, more restful sleep. Make your bedroom a restful place and keep a consistent bedtime for you and your kids even if you're no longer going to work and school.

**19. Let it go.**

Holding grudges or stewing over past hurts will only perpetuate a cycle of negativity which can deplete your immune system. You may be surprised at the shift you can create in a relationship if you initiate a smile and an open heart. Book a session with Karna if you would like help in letting go of past pain.

**20. Sunshine!**

It stimulates the production of serotonin which is believed to act as a mood stabilizer. Being exposed to sunshine during the day helps produce healthy sleeping patterns, boosts your mood and may even help us live longer. People with depression often have low serotonin levels. How fortunate that we're headed into spring and summer as we practice social-distancing and can still go outside for some sun!

**21. Pamper yourself. Get creative!**

What do you really love to do to relax? Be creative and figure out how you can create your most favorite pampering moments at home! A hot bubble bath? Reading a good book? Having a massage (maybe your partner could massage your feet)? Mani-Pedi? Let your kids have some fun and paint your nails....My twin granddaughters' favorite thing was playing "Spa". Another favorite thing for them was putting on shows for us. Remember Adult Coloring books so popular a couple years ago? Coloring is a real stress-reliever for adults and kids. Play games with your kids and your family may have more fun than ever. How about cooking? Now you have time to try some new recipes. Be creative and figure out how to self-soothe during this time of being at home so much. Help your kids tap into their creativity and learn to play.....more than just their video games!

**22. Take a Vitamin D supplement.**

Studies show that low Vitamin D levels have been linked to anxiety and depression. Some studies have recommended that people who live in latitudes above 32-degrees north take a supplement of 5,000 IUs a day during the winter.

**23. Eat Healthy Food.**

Eat healthy foods and eat breakfast before you tank up on coffee. Caffeine on an empty stomach can cause blood sugar levels to spike, which can cause attention problems and irritability.

**24. Make a List**

Make a list of all the fun, comforting, relaxing, soothing things you like to do. Then when you're irritable, bored, uptight or anxious ..... pull out your list and figure out how you can change your mood before you start feeling stressed and begin sinking into a downward cycle. Help your children make their own lists.

**25. Be Grateful!**

Keep a Gratitude Journal to help you remember all the things which are good in your life. Even in these challenging times, there are so many things to be grateful for. A study of 186 people showed that those people who were more grateful reported better sleep, less fatigue, less depression, more confidence in their ability to care for themselves, and lower levels of systemic cardiovascular inflammation. The practice of being grateful increases your dopamine production which encourages your brain to seek more of the same. When you express gratitude, your brain says, "Ohh... do that again"... because it feels good! The more you are grateful for, the more you will find to be grateful for, and the better you will feel. Start your day with prayer ( if you believe in the power of prayer) or with a gratitude exercise of thinking of 5 or more things you're grateful for. Before you fall asleep, reflect on your day and find 5 or more things that you appreciated this day.

**26. Be Conscious**

Ask yourself every day..."What do I want to experience today?" Do I want to be fearful, suspicious, selfish, reactionary and panicked? Or do I want to be rational, open-minded, patient, generous, compassionate, creative and cooperative? Do I want to be focused on ME? Or WE? Our children are watching and learning from us. Be conscious of your thinking and how it influences your emotions. If you're staying home most of the time now.....you have more time. Use this time to become conscious of how you're thinking. Train yourself to be positive. Train yourself to see the glass as half-full, not half-empty. Choose to get creative – not depressed. The solution to the problem of the coronavirus requires us to care about others, especially vulnerable in our community right now. It requires us to work together and behave in ways that are for the Greater Good. Facts not fear. Clean hands. Open hearts. Our children will thank us for being conscious.