

31

Days to Less Stress

Relax During the Lazy Days of Summer

Stress has been so ingrained in our days and in our culture that you probably don't even recognize it any more. But summer is the perfect time to relax, slow down, and just enjoy the weather. What better time than July to use these lazy days to relieve any stress you've been experiencing? Learn to cope with stress from this month forward by starting with these 31 daily tips.



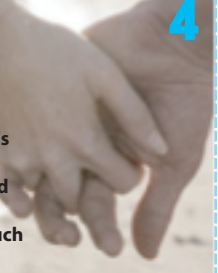
July

1 **Reach out.** Develop a network of friends and family who you can rely on and confide in. Call or visit them when you need to talk or vent. By sharing and listening, they will help you calm down.

2 **Work up a sweat.** Exercise is one of the best ways to de-stress. Pop in a workout video, hop on your bike or grab your jump rope. Picture the stress leaving your body through your pores, and let it go.

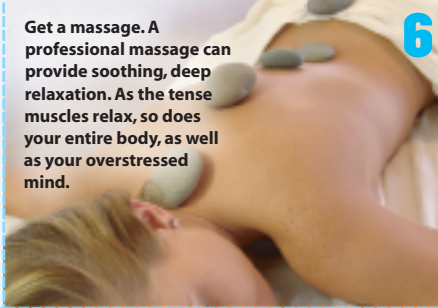
3 **Just breathe.** When a stressful situation arises, breathe in and out slowly and deeply for 10 full breaths. Exhaling slowly decreases your heart rate and calms the body, helping reduce stress.

4 **Hold hands.** A recent study published in Psychological Science found that hand-holding calms the body's reaction to stress. So grab the hand of a friend or loved one whether you're sitting on the couch or taking a walk.



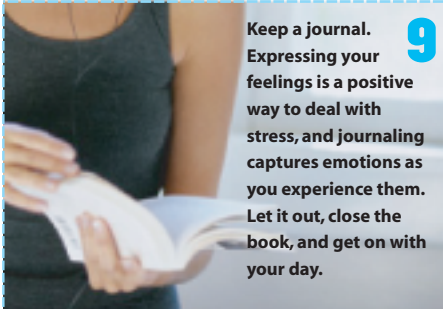
5 **Organize your life.** De-stress your mind by de-cluttering. Clear off your desk, clean out your closet, utilize a planner and donate items you don't use. You'll be more relaxed and ready to tackle other issues.

6 **Get a massage.** A professional massage can provide soothing, deep relaxation. As the tense muscles relax, so does your entire body, as well as your overstressed mind.



7 **Develop a mantra.** Does a particular word, phrase or quote help you calm down and relax? Make it your mantra. Write it, think it, and repeat it any time you feel stressed, impatient, or anxious.

8 **Sleep in.** Most adults need 7-8 hours of sleep each night. Staying well-rested keeps your mind (and body) healthy and better able to handle stressors. A good nap itself can even decrease tension!



9 **Keep a journal.** Expressing your feelings is a positive way to deal with stress, and journaling captures emotions as you experience them. Let it out, close the book, and get on with your day.

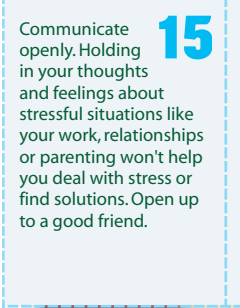
10 **Don't multitask.** With a lot to do in a little time, you might think it's efficient to multitask. Talk about stress! He who chases two rabbits catches neither. Focus on one thing at a time for a better outcome.

11 **Experience aromatherapy.** Certain scents can evoke a calm state of mind. Known relaxants include lavender, chamomile, patchouli, rosemary and more. Try candles, incense, or air fresheners.

12 **Try yoga.** This form of exercise helps reconnect your mind and body in the present moment, decreasing stress and enhancing well-being. Try a class at a local studio, or a video in the privacy of your own home.

13 **Plan something fun.** Set aside time to participate in activities you enjoy on a regular basis. Plan a weekend trip, take a drawing class, or schedule a round of golf to take your mind off things.

14 **Accept imperfection.** Be realistic--no one is perfect. Don't be afraid to ask for help, and appreciate the outcome of your best efforts, even if it falls short of ideal.



15 **Communicate openly.** Holding in your thoughts and feelings about stressful situations like your work, relationships or parenting won't help you deal with stress or find solutions. Open up to a good friend.

17 **Play a game.** You probably have a dozen stashed in your closet, waiting to be dusted off. A quick game of Candy Land, Shoots & Ladders, Connect Four, or even Twister is always good for a smile.



18 **Take care.** Experts agree that a healthy body is better apt to handle stress. Take care of yourself by exercising, eating healthy, drinking responsibly, avoiding drugs and getting regular health checkups.

19 **Practice patience.** When you're in a hurry, everything becomes urgent. Give yourself plenty of time to get things done. Think of that slow driver as a teacher, encouraging you to relax and be patient.

20 **Put things in perspective.** Most problems are easier to handle when you keep them in perspective and avoid making mountains out of molehills.



21 **Meditate.** When you meditate on a word, sound, symbol, or image, you develop mindfulness. This allows you to ignore distractions and engage in the present, helping relieve stress and enhance well-being.

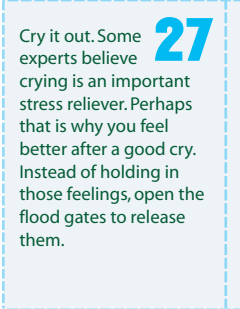
22 **Take a walk.** Need a break from the office or hectic day at home? Slip out the door and let your feet take you somewhere. Walking will help you clear your head and relax. It's great aerobic exercise, too!

23 **Give yourself a massage.** Just like getting a professional massage, self-massage of your shoulders, neck, feet and other pressure points can reduce tension and stress. Simply rub your tension away.

24 **Let go of the past.** Research shows that those who ruminate a lot may have higher blood pressure, more stress hormones, and shorter life spans. For the sake of your health, forgive and forget.

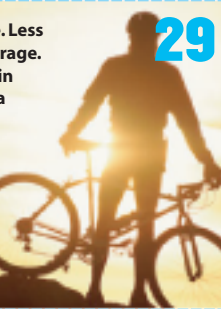
25 **Stop over-planning.** If your calendar is full and you're a slave to your day planner, you might be overscheduled and overstretched. Cut out a few things so you spend your time doing what's important to you.

26 **Say no to drugs and alcohol.** Although these may seem to relieve tension, relying on them to cope will hurt your health and resilience. Find healthy ways to deal with stress and emotions.



27 **Cry it out.** Some experts believe crying is an important stress reliever. Perhaps that is why you feel better after a good cry. Instead of holding in those feelings, open the flood gates to release them.

28 **De-stress your commute.** Less driving means less road rage. Instead of stressing out in traffic, relax as you ride a bus or train, carpool (so you only drive sometimes), or bike to work (to release stress and endorphins).



29 **Stay present.** When stressing about the past or future, remind yourself to focus on what matters right now at this very moment. After all, there's no use in worrying about things you can't change.



30 **Take a vacation.** A few days off can recharge your batteries and help you relax. After all, employers give you vacation time for a reason. Don't be afraid to use it when you need a mental break.