

## Relaxing Ways to De-Stress

We live in tense and stressful times.

"But you can easily avoid adding to the turbulence," says Mike George, meditation teacher and author of *1,001 Ways to Relax*. "In fact, you can become one of those people for whom the world has a great need: those who can stay calm in a crisis, cool in the midst of chaos and focused on the positive when everyone around you is inclined to reinforce the negative. If you can stay relaxed and calm, it helps others do the same."

Having spent 20 years researching stress and teaching meditation and stress management techniques, Mr. George is uniquely suited to suggest the following ways to avoid and deal with the stresses in your life.



**Forget yesterday's mistakes.** Today is a new day. Your mind has been refreshed by sleep, and there's no need to believe that yesterday's misjudgments or misfortunes will repeat themselves.

**Decide to be happy today,** no matter what happens or who does what. It's within your power to make this choice. "Happiness is the true condition of the self-aware, and its source lies within ourselves," says Mr. George. "To decide to be happy is a positive, self-fulfilling action, comparable to saying 'I do' in a marriage ceremony."

**Create a personal affirmation** and declare it 20 times to yourself each morning. "Affirmations are simple, positive 'I am...' statements -- such as 'I am at peace,' 'I am a tower of strength' -- that build self-esteem and a strong sense of self," says Mr. George. "They counter the negative messages we often give ourselves by reminding us of our intrinsic value."

**Press the center of your palm** with the thumb of your other hand to relieve nervousness in stressful situations, such as interviews. Increase the pressure steadily as you breathe out. Hold for three to seven seconds. Release the pressure as you breathe in. Repeat three times or until you feel your anxiety slip away.

**Don't just do something, sit there!** Contrary to the usual phrase, this is sometimes the best approach when emotions are running high, your problems seem overwhelming or your internal compass isn't giving you a clear direction to follow. Simply take a few moments to sit in stillness, gathering your strength. Give your mind and body permission to relax.

**Unravel a problem.** Most problems have a number of strands tangled together, often in complicated ways. If it seems impossible to unravel the knot, make a start by trying to name each of the different strands. Draw them on paper, with a word or two alongside each separate line to label it. You may find that identifying the pieces of the problem in this way leads to a breakthrough in working out a solution.

**Think of reasons why you can do something, rather than why you can't** -- all it takes is a shift in attitude. Once you've broken the negative logic of your thinking, you create space in which positive approaches can appear.

**Act "as if."** Your mind is very suggestible. If you act as if you're calm, happy and free of stress, eventually you'll find it becomes a reality.

**Really listen to people.** By paying close attention to others, you stay in balance with them. Actively listen to what other people are saying.

**Bring an open mind** to new people, places and experiences. "Your way is only one of many ways," says Mr. George. "Open-minded people tend to find more to enjoy and less to be disappointed or stressed by."

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## What to Do When Depression Enters a Relationship



The pressure of being in a relationship can feel overwhelming to someone living with depression. When you're struggling with an illness that makes you tired, sad, and generally uninterested in life, often the last thing on your mind are the needs of others. Equally frustrating and emotionally draining is trying to maintain a relationship with someone who's depressed.

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It's not easy being a smart spender in a world where consumers are constantly goaded to buy now and worry about the consequences of their purchase decisions later. But according to personal financial experts, good things come to those who practice wise spending habits.

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