

# TIPS TO Ease Tension

**Work on your attitude.** How you react to stress is determined by how you perceive a particular event. Reframe your response by acknowledging that the stress event is outside of you. You are the center and controller of your response.

**Think about something else.** Distract yourself to break whatever chain of thought is producing the stress.

**Think positively.** Think about a success or past achievement.

**Take a mental vacation.** Visualize or gaze at a postcard or poster of somewhere you would like to be and feel safe.

**Recite an anti-stress litany.** “This too shall pass.” “Tomorrow is another day.”

**Use affirmations.** “I can handle this.” “Everyone makes mistakes.” “We are all human.” “Staying calm helps me solve problems.”

**Count to 10.** Use the pause to breathe and relax. It will allow a more relaxed response and lower tension in muscles.

**Look away.** Focus on something at least 20 feet away to let eye muscles change tension.

**Get up and leave.** If appropriate, leave the stressful situation for a little while. Go out to lunch. Walk around the block. The exercise and space gives you time to recover from the stress response.

**Take several deep breaths.** Stress and tension tighten muscles. Breathe by pushing out with stomach muscles to bring oxygen and energy into your body. Exhale and let go of the stress.

**Yell or cry.** If the environment is private and safe, emotional release can be healing.

**Stretch.** Stretching muscles reduces the sensation of stress even when we can’t do anything about the source of the stress.

**Massage your target muscles.** Recognize which muscle groups you tense up when feeling stress. Massage those muscles to break the stress-tension cycle.

**Press on your temples.** Ancient application of acupressure using your fingertips moving in small circles over your temples relaxes muscles elsewhere in your neck.

**Drop your jaw and roll it left and right.** Notice if you clench your teeth when feeling stress. Yawning and jaw stretches release tension.

**Stretch your chest for better breathing.** Press your shoulder blades together expanding your chest as you inhale. Relax as you exhale. Repeat 4-5 times.

**Relax all over.** Use progress relaxation techniques to start with your feet and move progressively to your head (feet, legs, chest, arms, neck, head) relaxing each major muscle group one at a time.

**Listen to relaxation tapes** (natural sounds) or music. Both can promote relaxation and be inspiring.

**Give someone a compliment or thank-you.**

**Share a joke** with someone.

**Smile** at someone or even yourself.

**Take a minute** to gaze at the photo of a loved one on your desk, wall or in your wallet.

**Comb your hair.**

**Get a drink of water.**

**Review an item from your happy file**—this is a file where you put birthday cards, thank you notes, letters of appreciation, photos, etc.