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upwave
Boost: Develop a Stress-Busting Attitude
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Get a Stress-Busting ‘Tude

Admit it: you’re stressed. Whether you’re struggling to meet a deadline at work, cramming for finals or dealing with a grumpy (and loud) toddler, you feel like you could use a break. It’s natural. And we agree with you.

Unfortunately, there’s no escape from most of our everyday stressors, and the truth is, we really wouldn’t want to get away if we could. Stress is what keeps us going and, like red wine, in small doses it can actually be good for us.

According to Michael T. Murray, author of *Stress, Anxiety and Insomnia: What The Drug Companies Won't Tell You And Your Doctor Doesn't Know*, the resistance reaction to stress provides the changes required to meet emotional crisis, perform strenuous tasks and fight infection. “But continued stress increases the risk of significant disease (including diabetes, high blood pressure and cancer) and results in exhaustion,” he says.

Of course, one person’s stress is another person’s strength — everyone reacts differently. Hans Selye, the father of modern stress research, perhaps said it best in his book, *The Stress of Life*: “Stress is not even necessarily bad for you; it is also the spice of life, for any emotion, any activity causes stress. But, of course, your system must be prepared to take it. The same stress which makes one person sick can be an invigorating experience for another.”

Whether you are aware of it or not, you have developed a pattern (or patterns) for coping with stress. The question is, are they positive or negative? Are you overeating? Watching too much TV? Indulging in retail therapy? Screaming at your cat? Take a break and find a new way to deal with your stressors. Here are some options:

Good

Laugh. You may not be able to control what’s causing you stress, but you do have some control over your response to it. **Laughter** heats up and then cools down your stress response, ultimately reducing your heart rate and blood pressure, and leaving you relaxed. So try a good laugh (even a fake one) the next time a family member gets your goat.

Talk. Find a friend you trust to **talk** things through or just distract you from the current crisis. Better yet, find a funny friend, and have a laugh together.

Listen. Things like **music** and the outdoors have a tendency to take the edge off and transport us somewhere else. So strap on your iPod, or just listen to the lyrical notes of nature, on a good, long hike.

Slow down. While it may sound counterintuitive (our instinct is to ramp up to finish that to-do list, not ease up), taking a step back to **evaluate** what's on your plate and make a plan can help you be more productive.

Better

Jennifer Aniston has said she's using yoga as a way to combat pre-wedding stress. And you can, too (without the nuptials, of course). Meditation and [diaphragmatic breathing](#) can also bring about balance and an overall sense of calm, and corral the jumble of thoughts bouncing around your brain.

Psychology expert Toni Bernhard's favorite stress-relief method is to lightly run one or two fingers over his lips, which stimulates the parasympathetic nervous system, relaxing the mind and body. "It's remarkable how this simple gesture produces an immediate sense of calm in the mind and body," he told **Psychology Today**. Just be prepared for some stares if you try this trick at work.

Stop juggling. As a mom who works from home, I know a thing or two about juggling. And I bet you do, too. But did you know that multitasking is not exactly a résumé-worthy asset? No, the ability to focus and concentrate on one item at a time is a much bigger bragging right. And if you're like me, you'll find that you won't actually die if one of your to-dos doesn't get done.

Best

When your stress becomes overwhelming, you might want to try sweating it out. Murray promotes exercise and healthy lifestyle habits as an effective way to combat stress. He says, "People who exercise regularly are much less likely to suffer from fatigue and depression. Tension, depression, feelings of inadequacy and worries diminish greatly with regular exercise."