

## Stress And Anxiety: What You Can Do

In our fast-paced, industrialized, and technologically driven society, stress and anxiety are par for the course. Almost no one gets off Scott-free when these cards are handed out, although some people are more prone to succumb to their pressures than others are. There are many reasons why some people are more resilient than others are.

If you are suffering from chronic stress and anxiety, you can feel reassured that there is much you can do to lessen the impacts of stress on your physical, mental, and emotional health. As you probably know, stress is responsible for, or at the very least, exacerbates, up to 90% of diseases. Anxiety is in fact a by-product of stress.

When you are calm and relaxed, you cannot be anxious at the same time. Stress, by definition, is the body's survival response to a perceived threat. Adrenaline surges and gets us ready to flee or fight the danger. When this survival response does not get turned off, because we are faced with multiple perceived threats per day, our stress becomes chronic and our health inevitably suffers.

Emotional symptoms of stress can vary from irritability, anger, and impatience to depression, insomnia, and of course anxiety, worry, and fear.

Here are five simple strategies to help you train your body to turn off the stress response and switch on the para-sympathetic nervous system which is responsible for relaxation, and all the normal bodily functioning which gets compromised when you are stressed:

- **Breathe.** This is the first way to connect with your parasympathetic nervous system. When the body is relaxed and calm, you should breathe into your lower belly. Just watch a sleeping baby to see a perfect demonstration of the correct way to breathe. Close your eyes and practice. Feel your belly get pushed out as you breathe in. Then, as you breathe all the air back out, see your belly shrink back in towards your spine. Keep breathing like this for a minute or two. Notice how you feel, before and after.
- **Relax.** Another important way to lower your anxiety levels is to learn to relax. There are many fine videos on YouTube. Try them out until you find one that works for you.  
Learning to relax your body before bed can help you sleep better, which in turn will help build your resilience to stress.
- **Meditate.** Studies have shown that experienced meditators produce more of the neurotransmitter GABA than non-meditators. GABA is a natural tranquilizer. Start with a daily practice of a few minutes only. Over time, build it up to 20 minutes or more. The key is consistency.
- **Change your negative thinking.** Fearful, worried, anxious, or negative thinking may not be based on fact. Most often, it is our minds projecting into the future about what *could* happen. We don't know for certain what the future holds, so this kind of thinking is not helpful. It causes us to experience uncomfortable feelings. It keeps us focused on the future, so we miss each moment as it passes. Changing your thoughts helps you experience more positive feelings. A great way to start doing this is by

practicing gratitude. The more you feel grateful, the more your body and mind is learning how to *be happy* and how to stay *present*.

- **See A Professional Therapist.** If you are not able to lessen your anxiety by yourself, it is worth going to see a trained therapist. You may have some subconscious beliefs, which are causing you to feel stressed, and they can help you uncover and transform those into more healthful beliefs.

These five simple tools: meditation, relaxation, breathing, changing your negative thoughts, and seeing a therapist, can give you the tools you need for a lifetime of happiness, contentment, gratitude, and inner peace.