

Relieving Stress through Exercise

**Exercises for relieving stress may be in the form of physical, mental, or spiritual exercise.
What is good for the body is good for the mind and vice versa.**

Physical exercise is one of the most effective ways of relieving stress. Exercise can help with stress relief because it provides a way for the body to release tension and pent-up frustration. When we physically exert ourselves, the body releases chemical substances (endorphins) that are similar in nature to opiates. These natural substances produced by our own bodies are free of side effects, except for making us feel good.

Aerobic vs. Anaerobic Exercise

Aerobic exercise is sustained activity involving the major muscle groups, such as swimming, running, or brisk walking. It increases your heart and respiratory rate, and thus more oxygen is circulated through the body. This kind of exercise strengthens your cardiovascular system and increases your overall strength and stamina.

Anaerobic exercise does not tax the cardio respiratory system directly. This does not mean, however, that low-impact exercise is useless. It improves your muscle strength and flexibility and can still be a good outlet for negative feelings that you might have bottled up, and it may straighten other parts of your body. Weight lifting and stretching are examples.

NOTE: Activities can be either high or low impact and are suitable for different ages and levels of condition or general health.

Activities

Find a group to exercise with. Participating in a group exercise program increases the likelihood of your enjoying and continuing the activity. Also, we seem to work a bit harder if we are part of a group. Many city recreational centers offer fitness classes such as yoga, tai-chi, walking programs, cardio programs, and many more. Refer to your local recreation centers and gyms for specific class offerings.

Duration, Frequency, and Target Heart Rate

Stress relief activities can be done for a duration of 15 minutes to one hour, 2 to 3 times a week, depending on activity and physical abilities. In addition to the time, the heart rate during exercise can also be used to regulate activity. The use of Target Heart Rate is a good way to monitor progress. A person's target heart rate is between 50% – 75% of the maximum heart rate, which is calculated by subtracting your age from 220 bpm (beats per minute).

Informational Help Sites for Stress Management

- [International Stress Management Association](http://www.isma.org.uk) (www.isma.org.uk)
- [AIS-American Institute of Stress](http://www.stress.org) (www.stress.org)
- [Stress Management for Businesses](http://www.businessballs.com/stressmanagement.htm) (www.businessballs.com/stressmanagement.htm)
- [American Heart Association](http://www.americanheart.org) (www.americanheart.org)

References

- [Yoga, Meditation, and Other Relaxation Technique](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_relief_meditation_yoga_relaxation.htm) (www.helpguide.org/mental/stress_relief_meditation_yoga_relaxation.htm)
- [Exercise](http://www.holisticonline.com/stress/stress_exercise.htm) (www.holisticonline.com/stress/stress_exercise.htm)
- [Stress Release Exercises](http://www.stress-relief-exercises.com) (www.stress-relief-exercises.com)