

Top tips to beat stress

- 1) Take some gentle exercise - 20 minutes every day or half an hour three times a week. **Suggestions:** take a brisk walk to work - even getting off the bus or train one stop earlier can help. Take up a new (active) hobby such as dancing or swimming.
- 2) Try meditating.
 - a. Sit quietly in a chair with your head supported and both feet flat on the floor. Close your eyes, take a deep breath and as you exhale focus on a word to suit your circumstances (examples: peace, love, calm). Breathe deeply several times.
 - b. If you still find it hard to relax, imagine yourself on a beach in the sunshine - enjoy feeling the warmth of the sun on your skin, hear the lapping of the waters.
 - c. The troubled thoughts of the day will try to force themselves into your mind, don't worry. Just calmly put them to one side.
 - d. Do this regularly for only ten minutes every day (more if you can spare the time) and you'll soon feel the benefits.
- 3) Laughter is one of the best ways to relieve tension
 - a. It exercises muscles in your face and abdomen and the bigger the belly laugh the greater the effect.
 - b. Laughing can boost your immune system and even lower your blood pressure.
 - c. Laughter releases endorphins, the body's natural painkillers, which can increase your feel-good-factor
 - d. However if you really don't feel like laughing don't let that stop you - even fake laughter can have a beneficial effect as the 'laughter' muscles can't tell the difference!
- 4) Using a few drops of Camomile, Marjoram, Ylang-ylang, Sandalwood, Patchouli or Neroli essential oils in your bath at bed-time can help you relax after a hectic day. Make sure the bath isn't too hot, as this could raise your blood pressure.
- 5) To help promote sleep, avoid eating late in the day - ideally allow three hours between your last meal and bedtime. When you do eat, make sure you're sitting at a table concentrating on the meal in front of you, don't snatch meals on the run, while working or watching television.
- 6) Every day make sometime just for you to do something YOU want to do. It could be reading, a lovely relaxing bath, a brisk walk or even something challenging that you've always wanted to do such as learning a new language. Any of these could help you feel better about yourself. Initially you may find you have difficulty setting aside 'you' time, so block out half an hour in your diary every day to give yourself permission! If you have a family, don't feel guilty about this - the whole family will benefit when your stress levels are reduced.