



Stress Management & Relaxation.

- Your ability to deal or cope with events in your life is entirely personal. Things ‘are as they are’ – it’s how we deal with them that matters.
- Feeling stressed or anxious can have any number of reasons or no reason at all.
- These are changing times and everybody is responding in their own way.
- It’s important to remember this – you are not alone! And it is harder for some than for others.
- In learning how to stabilise yourself, you will start to see these events from a different perspective.
- This allows you to take a different approach to life, one which is more life-affirming, generous and open-hearted.
- You will find you can approach life with more clarity and confidence, and will benefit from sharing this process with others.

How to off-set the effects of stress.

1. Talk about it, share it, communicate. Whether to an individual or in a group, share your experiences and ask them to share theirs. Because prolonged stress tends to shut down the heart centre, this can feel very hard to do at first. It has been shown that this kind of co-operation improves intuitive problem-solving.
2. Given the difficulty we may feel at opening our hearts, be compassionate with yourself and others. Care and compassion has been shown to release beneficial hormones that help to balance and restore your system.
3. Be patient – one step at a time – and when you feel better, be conscious of it, acknowledge it.
4. Practice random kindness – even small acts can make a big difference. We used to say, ‘Send out a smile and it will come back to you.’ When dealing with difficult people stay ‘in your heart’ – remember, they are dealing with their own stress too. Your compassion may help them and even encourage them to be compassionate to others.
5. Every day, set aside some time to count your blessings. The heart is very sensitive to gratitude, to feelings of love and benevolence, for other people or even for our pets. Foster these feelings, learn to recognize the ‘glow’ in the chest, feelings of lightness warmth or expansion in that area, sometimes even a gentle smile – all these show that balance is being restored between the emotional and cognitive brain. This coherence between the heart and the emotional brain stabilizes the autonomic nervous system. Learn to recognize and cultivate this feeling in the chest by practicing gratitude, then you have it as a guide to help you recognize and hear what your heart is telling you.

Hannah Lovegrove July 2011.



You will need a bolster or cushion, a mat, a chair, and a folded blanket. If you don't have a bolster, use another folded blanket to create 'lift' under the spine, either lengthways or across the body as shown.

Use a kitchen timer – this allows you to relax completely into the pose for the full time allowed and allows recuperation time for the mind and body.



1. Resting position

Lie down on your mat with your knees bent up. Lift your hips and put a yoga block under your sacrum – this is the hard bone at the back of your pelvis, between your tailbone and your waist. (Have a look at the picture.) Put your feet down on the floor hip-width apart, knees bent and together, to allow your

abdominal muscles to rest. The legs should feel completely relaxed, knees falling together naturally. Stay here, breathing evenly for 4-5 minutes. Lift your hips and slide the block out. Rest your back on the mat for 2 breaths. To come up, bend up your knees and roll over to your right hand side to push yourself up from the floor. Do not sit straight up.



2. Adho Mukha Virasana

Sit on your heels, keeping your feet and knees close together. This will stretch the tops of your feet, so if it feels painful, put a folded blanket on your mat, under your ankles. Now keep your big toes together and take your knees wide apart. Keeping your hips on your heels, walk your hands forward on the mat until your chest

meets your thighs and your arms are straight. If your hips come up or your forehead won't meet the floor, use a couple of thick books under your forehead. Rest here for 4-5 minutes, keeping your eyes closed and your brain quiet.



3. Supta Baddhakonasana

Place the folded blanket at one end of your bolster. Sit on your mat at the other end of your bolster with your knees bent, feet flat on the floor. Slowly roll down along the bolster, bringing the soles of your feet together and drawing your heels towards you. Arrange the support for your knees so that there is no strain on your inner thighs, using yoga bricks or cushions to support your

knees and a strap or tie around your feet to draw them close. Arrange the folded blanket under your head and neck, but not under your shoulders. Stay, breathing quietly and naturally, for 5 minutes. Slowly lift your knees together, roll to one side and push the bolster away. Then roll over to your right side, and push yourself up to sitting. (Don't sit straight up - you'll undo all the good work you have just done.)



4. Supported Passive Back-bend

Place a folded blanket at the top end of your mat, and your bolster or cushion across your mat about a third of the way down. Sit on your mat in front of the bolster with your legs bent, feet flat on your mat. Roll down over your bolster so that your back ribs come to rest on it, your chest lifts strongly up, and the back of your head rests on the blanket beyond. Your shoulders will be in

mid air and your arms will be on the floor at shoulder height, just beyond the bolster. Look at the picture to get your position correct before you finally stretch your legs out straight and relax. If you find the stretch intense at first, have more height in the blanket under your head, and/or put a cushion under your hips. As you become familiar with the pose, reduce the height of the blanket, and try without the cushion. The pose should feel relaxing. Stay here, breathing evenly for 3-4 minutes. To come up, bend up your knees and roll over to your right hand side to push yourself up from the floor. Do not sit straight up.



5. Legs over a chair

Put a chair sideways on your mat with a folded blanket on the seat. Sit down close to it, swinging your legs over the seat, and lie with your back on the floor and your legs resting over the seat of the chair. The edge of the seat should come right into the backs of your knees, so your calves rest completely on the seat. If you are less than about 5'6" tall, you might be

more comfortable with a block under your hips. If you are over 5'9", you will find more height on the chair seat more comfortable. Roll your shoulders back and have your hands either side of your body, palms facing upwards and fingers relaxed. Close your eyes and rest for 5 minutes, keeping your jaw relaxed and your mind focused on your gentle, steady breathing. When you feel ready, roll over to your right side and stay resting there for a few moments before you come up to sitting.



6. Savasana

Sit in the middle of your mat with your knees bent. Roll slowly down, keeping your spine straight, roll your shoulders back and take a folded blanket for your head if it feels 'thrown' back. Place a bolster under your knees and extend your legs over it. Let your legs relax completely. Draw your shoulder-blades down your back, lift your chest and roll your

shoulders to the floor. Have the backs of your hands on the floor or bend your elbows and rest your hands on your tummy, elbows out. Relax your face, your jaw and close your eyes. Take your tongue away from the roof of your mouth. Stay, breathing quietly, for 5 minutes. To come up, bend up your knees again and roll onto your right side. Rest here and push yourself up to sitting when you feel ready.

Remember to keep your jaw, tongue and eyes soft, and to relax your facial muscles.