



**Boulder Psychological Services, LLC**

Serving the Individual, Family, and Community.

## **Stress Reduction Strategies**

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### **Reduce over-scheduling**

If you're feeling overwhelmed with everything on your plate, try to reduce one or two nonessential activities. This may require learning how to determine what is truly essential.

### **Learn relaxation techniques**

From simple breathing techniques to visualizing yourself in a peaceful place, relaxation techniques can significantly reduce your stress level.

### **Muscle relaxation and exercise**

Simply tensing various muscle groups for 5-10 seconds followed by 10-20 seconds of relaxing those same muscles can significantly reduce muscle tension resulting from stress. Moderate exercise can also be a great stress reducer. Take a hike!

### **Be aware of your thinking**

We tend to place a lot of stress on ourselves based on our perfectionist, pessimistic, and generally negative thoughts. By trying to be more aware of our thinking and shifting to more rational, logical, positive thoughts (and keeping things in perspective), we can significantly reduce our subjective experience of stress. This can be easier said than done and professional assistance is often helpful.

### **Use Your Imagination**

The mind is very powerful and if we focus on a very relaxing image, the body eventually experiences it as though we're really there. To see for yourself, try this simple exercise:

1. Identify a place that you've been that was very relaxing (e.g. a beach, the mountains). If needed, make one up.
2. List everything that you might see, hear, smell and (tactilely) feel in this special place.
3. Rate your current level of stress from "0" (not stressed) to "100" (very stressed).
4. Find a peaceful place to sit, close your eyes, take a deep breath in and breathe out slowly.
5. Try to imagine all the details that you listed in your mind's eye, while periodically repeating the deep breathing.
6. After 5-10 minutes slowly open your eyes and re-rate your current level of stress. Notice how much more relaxed you feel.

### **Have fun!**

We tend to undervalue simply having fun and enjoying time with friends and family. Imagine if we placed as much importance on recreation as we do on achievement. Not only would we be healthier, we would also achieve more.