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3 Surprising Ways to Beat Stress



When you're feeling a little keyed up, try these low-tech stress relievers:

- 1 **Smile**, even if you don't feel like it. It might sound like a strange remedy for stress, but research shows that the simple physical act of smiling can boost your mood.
- 2 **Look at patterns**. Many objects in nature, such as leaves, flowers, seashells and ocean waves, follow regular patterns called **fractals**. Looking at fractals in nature or art can relax your mind.
- 3 **Color**. Coloring has been shown to stimulate creativity and induce calm. Combine this stress reliever with No. 2 by choosing a coloring book with mandalas or other repeating designs.

Wearable Technology



Look around your workplace and, chances are, you'll see coworkers wearing connected devices, such as watches, bracelets and other gadgets. Here's how to tap into the power and usefulness of wearable tech:

1. **Stay on track with health goals**. Wearables can count steps, remind you to get up and move around when you've been sedentary, monitor your sleep quantity and quality, and help you stick to an eating plan.
2. **Work more efficiently**. Access your professional information, all without having to consult your phone.
3. **Balance your budget**. Apps for wearable devices can help you track expenses and income on the go.
4. **Communicate instantly**. A wearable device can offer talk-to-text, translation and instant connectivity services.
5. **Talk instead of type**. Many wearables include voice recognition software, so you can keep your hands free.

Questions About Vitamin D



Vitamin D and the conditions related to its deficiency have been widely reported in recent years. Here are some facts about this important vitamin:

Why do we need vitamin D?

Vitamin D helps your body absorb calcium to strengthen your bones; a deficiency can contribute to **osteoporosis** (brittle bones). Vitamin D has also been linked to reducing the risk of several conditions, including heart disease, depression, multiple sclerosis, type 2 diabetes, high blood pressure and some cancers.

What are the sources of vitamin D?

Vitamin D is found in fatty fish, such as salmon, tuna and mackerel, egg yolks and fish oil. It is often added to foods, such as milk, orange juice, yogurt and cereal. Your body also produces vitamin D when you are exposed to sunlight.

Should I take vitamin D supplements?

You may need vitamin D supplements if blood tests show your vitamin D levels are low, you are a woman past menopause or you have certain health conditions or take certain medications. However, don't take vitamin D supplements without talking to your health care provider first. Your provider can determine if you need supplements and, if you do, how much you need.

Does wearing sunscreen keep your body from absorbing vitamin D?



Several studies show that even through sunscreen, most people get enough sunlight on their skin to help with vitamin D production. However, several factors may reduce the amount of vitamin D you get from sunlight, including climate, time of day, length of daylight, cloud cover, smog and skin melanin level.



Multiple studies have found that trying to do multiple tasks at the same time is a recipe for poor productivity.

Researchers have found that when people try to focus on two or more things, their attention, memory and ability to switch from one job to another all suffer.

For example, in a study published in the April 2017 issue of *Human Brain Mapping*, researchers performed brain scans on people as they watched short movie segments. First, the subjects watched longer clips in order from a single film. Then, researchers mixed up the movies and shortened the clips, so subjects had to rapidly switch from one story line to another and cope with interruptions, much like multitasking.

Results: Scans showed that the areas of the brain responsible for sequencing and interpreting information worked more efficiently when people watched longer clips in order from one movie. This suggests your brain works best when you focus on a single task or piece of information before moving on to the next.

Instead of multitasking, block out time to work on a single project (if possible). **Example:** Check email and electronic devices on a set schedule, instead of responding to every alert as it arrives. Take pleasure in finishing things and doing your best, rather than in the quantity of your work or how busy you feel.



Do brain games work?

A review of more than 130 studies published in late 2016 suggested that computerized games advertised as *capable of improving memory and thinking* may not work as promised. However, playing brain games may help a player feel accomplished and smart, which might provide its own boost. Plus, games are fun, which reduces stress. It's fine to play; just don't depend on a game to keep your brain healthy as you age. A heart-healthy lifestyle is the best thing you can do for your brain, according to Harvard Medical School.

Coping With Tragedy

If you've experienced tragedy, it can permanently alter your life. Take these steps to ease the journey back to wholeness:

Talk to someone. A friend, family member, counselor or health care professional can help you put your feelings in perspective.

Help others. Something as simple as doing chores for an elderly or disabled neighbor or giving blood can help you feel less powerless.

Nurture yourself. Eat well, exercise and avoid unhealthful coping behaviors. Habits, such as overeating, may make you feel better for a little while, but in the long run they will make you feel worse and potentially harm your health.

Give your mind and spirit time and space to heal. Attend religious services or a support group. Write in a journal or join others online who are in the same situation.

Stay busy. Stick to your daily routine as much as possible.

You may experience a range of emotions, from shock and sadness to anxiety and anger. There are no wrong feelings; with time you will get back on an even keel. Talk to your health care provider if negative feelings become unbearable or you can't cope with daily tasks.



Save your neck

Supporting your head is a nonstop job for your neck. Static activities, such as prolonged driving or computer work, often produce neck strain and pain. To help support the weight on your neck, keep your back straight and head upright. To relieve tension, periodically flex your back and shoulders and gently move your head up and down, left and right. Avoid long periods of hunching over your smartphone or tablet. Also, sleep on your back or side with good support from a pillow.



Note: Due to production lead time, this issue may not reflect the current COVID-19 situation in some or all regions of the U.S. For the most up-to-date information visit [coronavirus.gov](https://www.coronavirus.gov).

The **Smart Moves Toolkit**, including this issue's printable download,  **Live Stronger**, is at personalbest.com/extras/21V8tools.

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