

A 5-minute recipe for stress relief

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(HealthDay)—Whether it comes from demands at home, a slow commute or monthly bills, it's hard to escape stress. Beyond affecting your mood, it can play havoc with your health, from lost sleep and stress-

eating to weight gain and heart disease.

Fortunately, you can take steps to counter all these negatives. A simple solution is a 20-minute daily break to practice relaxation in a tranquil spot away from annoyances. But when time is in short supply, you can still do a five-minute de-stress to refresh and refocus. Here are five effective ideas:

Breathe with focus: Put all your concentration on taking long, deep breaths. Watch your belly expand as you inhale and contract as you exhale.

Meditate: Build on focused breathing by silently repeating a mantra, which can be just a sound, one word or a short, life-affirming phrase of your choice.

Exercise: Tap into the power of mood-boosting endorphins by spending a few minutes moving. You don't even have to leave your office—just close the door and try walking or running in place at your desk. Or get the mind-body benefits of [yoga](#) with a simple move like the Tree Pose: Standing straight, bend your right knee out to the side to place the sole of your right foot against the inner thigh of your left leg. Hold for 30 to 60 seconds, then switch legs and repeat.

Unplug: Turn off all your devices for the full five minutes and let your mind wander or contemplate the view from your window.

Guided imagery: With eyes closed, visualize yourself visiting a favorite place or doing a favorite activity. See yourself in the scene, smiling and having an enjoyable time.

And don't limit yourself to one technique—create a menu that you can pick from, depending on the situation.

More information: The U.S. National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health has more on [relaxation techniques](#) to ease stress.

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