

10 tips to instantly **EASE STRESS**

When we feel stressed, we can get stuck in a tricky cycle. Everything feels harder—particularly those daily rituals that promote good health.

We might feel too tired to go for a morning walk, or as though cooking meals (instead of getting takeaway) is too much effort. We may reach for wine more often to soothe a difficult day, or let tasks build up because they feel insurmountable.

This can get us stuck in a vicious cycle, where we find ourselves not doing the things that make us feel better and speaking unkindly to ourselves because we feel like we haven't accomplished anything, or the things we've consumed have made us feel lousy. Yet this only adds to that stress load in our mind and our body, and so the cycle continues.

So how do we get out of this cycle? By making small incremental changes that feel manageable. The following tips will help you to instantly ease stress—whether it's just a moment in time or you've found yourself stuck in a stress rut.



1

Take the pressure off

Some of our stress comes from our own perceptions of pressure and urgency. We pressure ourselves to get things done within a timeframe that we've set for ourselves or to accomplish more in a day than is reasonable to expect. Some things are truly urgent. Most urgency we create.

It's okay if you don't get through your entire to-do list in a day—in fact, it's more than likely not even possible. Save that urgency for things that really require it—slamming on the brakes when someone turns in front of you suddenly, for example. Be reasonable with your own expectations of yourself and take your foot (and your thinking) off the pressure pedal.

2

Move your body

Stress makes us feel tight and tense in our body and movement can help us to lessen that. Take a moment to tune into what type of movement would be best for you. For some it might be a gentle walk in nature—even if that is just stepping out into the backyard (or a nearby park) for five minutes and watching the leaves dance in the breeze. For others it might be putting on their favourite song and dancing it out in the living room. Letting loose can be incredibly freeing. Plus, music we love can foster our presence (taking us out of our head for a while, which is usually thinking about the past or the future).

3

Engage yourself in a mindful activity

Mindful activities don't have to mean breathing exercises or meditation—though of course you can do either of those things to ease stress. If those mindful activities don't appeal to you though, find something else that helps to quieten your mind for a while. It might be drawing, colouring, reading, knitting, pottery, dancing, tai chi or cooking. Anything that focuses your attention can help slow a racing mind. ing. Plus, music we love can foster our presence (taking us out of our head for a while, which is usually thinking about the past or the future).



4

Choose not to have that second cup of coffee

Caffeine stimulates the production of the stress hormone adrenaline. So drinking coffee when you're already stressed is only going to add to your body's burden. The problem is, when we are stressed and tired, it can feel like coffee is the only thing getting us through the day. And so, the more stressed and exhausted we feel, the more coffee we drink.

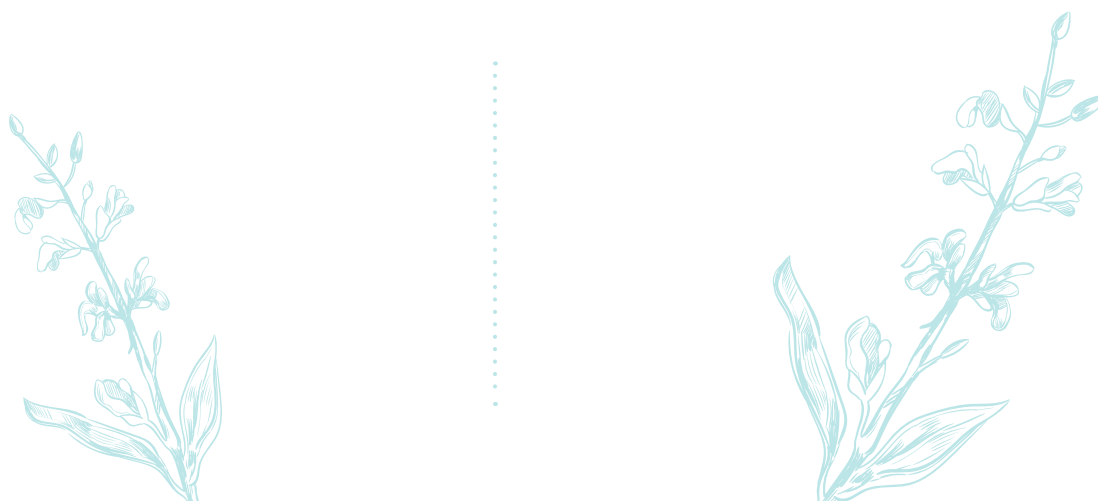
You may not realise that the cumulative impact of coffee producing more adrenaline is actually adding to that overall sense of fatigue. Reducing your caffeine intake can often result in better energy. So rather than have that second cup of coffee (or the third or fourth), have a cup of herbal tea instead. If it's the warm creaminess of a milk-based coffee you crave, switch the coffee for a turmeric latte or caffeine free chai instead, based on a milk or milk-alternative that suits your digestive system.

5

Add a daily green smoothie

When we are stressed, our nutrient needs go up. Over time, if stress is ongoing and persistent, our body can become depleted and this can contribute to a pervading sense of fatigue. A quick and easy way to get more nutrients in is to drink a green smoothie each day.

Add baby spinach or kale to a serve of your favourite fruit (frozen banana or berries work well) along with some water or coconut water. For even greater nourishment add half an avocado and a handful of nuts (or a spoon of nut butter). The added nourishing fats will help sustain you for longer and provide you with essential fat-soluble vitamins. A smoothie may not instantly ease your feelings of stress, but it will help to amp up your nutritional intake, rather than allowing the depletion to continue!



6

Think about three things you're grateful for daily

Your nervous system cannot be in two states at the same time. You are either in a sympathetic state—your stress response—or a parasympathetic state—your 'at rest', calm response. And you can influence which system you're in at any given time by changing what you focus on in that moment.

One quick and simple way to ease stress is to think about things in your life that you love and for which you are grateful. So try thinking of three things you are grateful for in your life each day and see how this makes you smile and instantly eases your stress. Try not to just rattle them off quickly and move on. Take your time to think about what you're grateful for, why you're grateful for these things and what they bring to your life. If it is people who evoke this sense of gratitude, you might even like to recall some beautiful moments you've shared together. It may also help to write it down so you have it to reflect on later.

7

Swap strenuous exercise for restorative practices

When I ask people what they do to alleviate stress, running features high up on the list. As I've said, moving the body is a great way to shift stress and, if stress is fleeting, running can be a way to burn off some of the effects adrenaline drives. Yet when stress becomes ongoing and persistent, running—and other strenuous forms of exercise—can begin to add to the problem, as exercise promotes the production of another stress hormone – cortisol. This is no problem if your cortisol levels are usually optimal, but if they are already elevated from long-term stress, you can unfavourably add to that load, depending on the type of exercise you choose.

So, if stress has been ongoing for you, it can help to incorporate more restorative practices for a period of time. Consider restorative yoga, Stillness Through Movement, gentle walks through nature, Qi Gong or a simple, daily breathing exercise. Notice how they foster a sense of calm through the body rather than ramping everything up.



8

Do something you've been putting off

Far too often we create stress for ourselves by allowing our mind to worry at something without acting on it. Not only does it become an open tab in our brain and silently drain our energy, it becomes another thing that we berate ourselves for not accomplishing. Not to mention, the harder you perceive that thing you've been putting off is, the more it's going to snowball into an avalanche of dread.

More often than not, the things we put off doing are never as hard as we work them up to be in our head. Maybe you need to have a difficult conversation with a loved one or a colleague and you dread their response. Maybe you need to cancel your gym membership and you know the person on the phone is going to try to talk you out of it and this makes you uncomfortable. Whatever it is, it will cease to be stress when you allow it to become a catalyst for change. Notice how your stress about it immediately falls away when you act on it.

9

Switch off your notifications

Does your phone ring and ping at you several times throughout the day, or even every hour? If you're already feeling like your day is at capacity, this is only going to contribute to you feeling like you're even more stretched. Not to mention that it can add up to a barrage of sound across the day.

If you thrive on noise or it doesn't bother you, of course set yourself up to receive every ping possible. But if you feel a little (or majorly) jolted every time your phone makes a sound, turn off the push notifications and the sounds. Keep your phone on silent, disconnect emails and use your phone as a phone for calls and text messages, if that appeals, or any combination of these.



10

Ask yourself what really matters

The more you allow to disturb your inner calm, the more likely you are to be producing stress hormones. If you find yourself frazzled by the teaspoons sitting in the drawer the wrong way, someone spelling your name incorrectly on an email or getting caught in traffic, pause and ask yourself: does it really matter? Often the answer is no.

Take this a step further and consider what really, truly matters to your heart. For most people it usually boils down to health, home and loved ones. So, if the little things are stressing you out, try to come back to what *actually* matters to you.





About Dr Libby

FOUNDER AND FORMULATOR OF BIO BLENDS

Nutritional biochemist, Dr Libby Weaver (PhD), is a thirteen-times bestselling author and speaker. Graduating from the University of Newcastle in Australia with a Bachelor of Health Science (Nutrition and Dietetics) with Honours, and a PhD in Biochemistry, she combines this knowledge with two decades of clinical practice working with patients from all walks of life.

Her strong understanding of biochemical pathways and clinical experience of what supports people to achieve their health outcomes led Dr Libby to found Bio Blends—a nutritional supplement range made entirely from foods, herbs and plants. Using carefully selected ingredients, each product helps people better nourish themselves and their loved ones to ultimately improve their health and happiness.

With a natural ability to break even the most complex of concepts into layman's terms, Dr Libby's health messages embrace her unique three-pillared approach that explore the interplay between nutrition, emotions, and the biochemistry of the body. Her practical and supportive online courses have helped over 10,000 women around the world find freedom from their health challenges.

