

# START YOUR DAY WELL TO REDUCE STRESS

The way you spend your morning can set the tone for the rest of your day. When things start out feeling stressful, you can experience a downward spiral of negative events and stressful responses. Conversely, if you start off your day from a place of feeling centred, you are better able to handle what comes along and enjoy the rest of your day to a fuller extent. Here are some healthy lifestyle habits to incorporate into your morning routine that can leave you better able to handle the stress you experience. Try one or several, and experiment until you find what suits you.



## PUT ON SOME MUSIC



Music therapy has been shown to reduce stress and have a positive effect on health, but you don't need an actual therapist to enjoy some of the benefits music has to offer. Listening to music as you get ready and start your day will create positive energy and a soothing sense of peace (or a sense of fun, depending on your taste in music). Music can complement other healthy lifestyle habits, adding a sense of calm to a yoga workout, putting a spring in your step on a morning walk, or stimulating your mind as you write in your planner.

## WAKE UP EARLIER

When you have a stressful morning, chances are that you're going to be feeling stressed for many hours to come. But it doesn't have to be that way! By simply waking up 15-20 minutes earlier than usual, you can enjoy a leisurely morning without the usual hustle and bustle. Although that snooze button may be tempting, starting the day on a calm note thanks to that extra time is more than worth it. Plus, every time you hit snooze, those interrupted spurts of sleep will only leave you feeling more tired.

## WAKE UP TO NATURAL LIGHT

Reduce your dependence on caffeine by stimulating yourself biochemically with plain old light. Sunlight is ideal, but turn on the all the lamps (full spectrum bulbs are best) if you're up before the sun. Unlike caffeine, there's no impending energy crash waiting for you in a couple of hours. If you can, use natural light to wake yourself with open curtains (unless outside artificial light will disturb your sleep at night) or a progressive light alarm.

## GO FOR A MORNING WALK

Walking has so many health benefits, and helping with stress management is a nice bonus. A morning walk can get you ready for your day, help you sleep better at night, lower your stress level and reduce your risk of numerous health conditions. Organise to go walking with a friend if you need extra motivation.

## DO SOME YOGA

For a healthy body and peaceful mind, few activities give as much 'bang for your buck' as yoga. Combining all the goodness of several stress management techniques, such as diaphragmatic breathing, meditation, stretching and more, yoga provides some of the best stress management and health benefits you can find in a single activity. A good way to start your morning is by doing a series of yoga poses called Sun Salutations. There are some great apps available that offer up quick 5-10min routines perfect for the morning.



## RELAX IN THE SHOWER

Many of us shower in the morning, though we often rush through it because we need to get on with our day. Why not take a few extra minutes and get into the right frame of mind? As you let the warm water loosen your muscles, think about the possibilities that lie ahead, think about what you have to be grateful for in life, and remember this feeling as you go about your day.

## EAT A BALANCED BREAKFAST

For those who start the day with a coffee and a doughnut, or nothing at all, read on! Breakfast is known as 'the most important meal of the day' for a very good reason: a healthy meal in the morning can balance your blood sugar levels and give you the sustenance you need to handle physical and mental stress. Without it, you will be less resilient, both physically and mentally, and may start to feel 'grungry' - a volatile combination of grumpiness and hunger. Be sure to have plenty of filling protein and healthy carbs, not just caffeine and overly processed foods. Some great options include eggs on sourdough toast with avocado; Greek yogurt with muesli and fresh fruit; porridge topped with banana; a homemade healthy muffin and fresh juice; natural peanut butter on grainy toast.

## DRINK GREEN TEA

Sipping a warm cup of tea is a soothing activity that will help you prepare for the day ahead and feel nurtured. Green tea is loaded with antioxidants which make it a great healthy beverage, yet some people find it bitter in taste so add a teaspoon of honey to sweeten. Herbal teas are also a great option, such as peppermint, chamomile, fennel, rosehip and lemon and ginger.

## WRITE IN A DIARY

Journaling has many health and stress management benefits, and can also lead to increased self-awareness. Take a few minutes to reflect on what you enjoyed about the day before, focus on what you hope to achieve in the day ahead, or just write about what you are grateful for right now. Writing once a day can help you feel focused, process negative emotions, and solve problems.



## GET CLEAR ABOUT YOUR INTENTIONS FOR THE DAY

You can intend to have a productive day. You can intend to have quality time with your family and friends with no distractions. You can intend to have a fun and brilliant day. You can intend to have a calm and peaceful day. You can intend to learn something new or be helpful to someone. Whatever it is just be clear about what it is you want your day to be. In order to create, manifest, and attract it, you must first align your heart, mind, and spirit with your intention. In other words, you truly need to feel it and believe it!

## PREPARE FOR THE NEXT DAY THE NIGHT BEFORE

Reduce the stress during your morning by getting the simple details out of the way the night before. Pack your bag. Iron your clothes. Prepare and pack your lunch. Put your keys, wallet etc. in their "home" if they are not already there so you can quickly find and grab them before heading out the door.

## HUG IT OUT

Hug all the people you love in your house before you leave. Connecting with the ones you love soothes stress and provides you with a positive start to your day, as well as keeping you focused on what's really important.

*"When you arise in the morning, think of what a precious privilege it is to be alive – to breathe, to think, to enjoy, to love".*

- Marcus Aurelius

## FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

- [www.http://www.prevention.com/mind-body/how-relieve-morning-stress](http://www.prevention.com/mind-body/how-relieve-morning-stress)
- <http://www.head2toehealth.com.au/blog/7-ways-to-start-your-day-well/>

**For further assistance, access your company's Employee Assistance Program or call Lifeline on 13 11 14.**



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