

**Tame the Tension- TOPS Weekly Newsletter**  
**Leave the stress and take the rest!**

**Set up:** Read through the program, stopping at each point, discuss; hand out stress tips- allow members to read- ask which one they do and how it works- which will they try.

**Program:** For many, stress can be the stumbling block that derails a weight-loss journey before it even gets off the ground. How you cope with stress may vary. Stress can lead to emotional eating or unlimited snacking. For others, stress may cause them a complete loss of appetite. But TOPS is here to help!

When you're not highly stressed, you generally feel like you're more in control of your life. You may find it easier to stick to healthy eating and exercise habits. If you're tempted to eat when you're bored or simply not hungry, it seems to be much easier to find another distraction.

Even the calmest person can get stressed from time to time. Here are five suggestions to help ease up and wind down that you can implement this week:

- 1. Go for a brisk 10- or 15-minute walk.** Even a five-minute walk can give you a break and get your blood pumping. A walk can serve as some alone time for you to clear your head or catch up with a buddy.
  
- 2. Reduce your caffeine intake.** We know a fresh morning cup of coffee is the way many like to start their day but try limiting yourself to just one cup — or maybe a smaller-than-usual portion. Even though it helps us stay alert, too much caffeine can make us jittery, anxious and dehydrated.
  
- 3. Light a candle.** Burning incense or oils can also help reduce your feelings of stress and anxiety. Some scents, like lavender, sweet orange, frankincense or ylang ylang\* are especially soothing.
  
- 4. Write it down.** List one of the things that causes you stress. Next, jot down one thing that makes you feel grateful. Add another, and another, and so on. When you're feeling low or upset about something, try to refocus on the positive things going on in your life.
  
- 5. Lean on chapter support.** Whether you're going through something big or small, your fellow members, at chapter or online, are here for you through it all.

**NOTES:**


**Hand out:** TOPS De-Stressing Tips

\*Ylang Ylang is a tropical tree that is native from India

# tops DE-STRESSING Tips

- ◆ Build a 30-minute cushion into your schedule. Unexpected events are bound to pop up. This cushion lets you deal with them without panic.
- ◆ Taking care of yourself should be one of your priorities. Have you built self-care time into today's routine?
- ◆ Don't let bad situations get out of hand. If you don't like the way things are going, speak up. The sooner you do, the easier it is to change things—and the less tension you'll have to live with.
- ◆ A stress-reduction break can be simple as sitting with eyes closed for five minutes, uninterrupted. Relax your muscles; concentrate on breathing in and out slooowwwllllly.
- ◆ If you're an empathetic, caring person, beware of letting others' stress become your stress. Just because someone near and dear to you is angry or tense does not mean you have to be, too. In fact, you'll support them better if you keep your perspective.
- ◆ Ask for help. Spouses, children, friends, and co-workers won't know you're overwhelmed unless you tell them. Specific requests, conveyed in a positive manner, work best.
- ◆ Deep breathing is a great way to relax anywhere, anytime. It brings oxygen into your body and signals the brain to reverse a stress reaction.
- ◆ Stress can be good when it accompanies a positive event or give you the oomph to "tough out" a bad situation. But you'll know you've crossed the line to "too much" stress when you start feeling out of control.
- ◆ If you find yourself tensing up more often than you'd like, hang a mirror where you'll glance into it often. The reflection of your frown or the deep furrow between your eyebrows may remind you to lighten up.
- ◆ Whether or not you're a "list maker," be aware that the *process* of composing a list is probably its most valuable feature, forcing you to gather random thoughts and to set priorities. Even a mental list will accomplish this—and reduce the tension of being bombarded with too many things to do at once.
- ◆ Get a professional massage. If you've never had one, you'll be amazed at how warm and loose your muscles feel afterward. Your mind relaxes, too. During stressful times, relief like that is anything but a luxury.

- ◆ Don't wait until stress completely zaps you to take a break. By then, your adrenaline level and blood pressure may be sky-high. Take a timeout as soon as you feel your own personal stress signals, which may include tense neck muscles, rapid and shallow breathing, a clenched jaw, or a jittery stomach.



- ◆ Are you doing something nice for yourself every day? If not, move yourself higher up on your priority list. Even on the busiest days, take five minutes to smell the roses (or a scented candle), or feel the sun on your face, or dance along to music, or...
- ◆ When stressed, people tend to reach for foods high in fat and sugar. If you find yourself doing so, don't bother looking for healthy snack substitutes when hunger isn't the problem. Instead, attack stress at its source.
- ◆ Make one small change. Even if you're overwhelmed by responsibilities and unpleasant realities, simply doing *one thing right* can get the ball rolling.
- ◆ The word "no" can be the greatest stress buster in your arsenal. Practice using a polite reply like "No, I'm sorry, I won't be able to do that." It'll save you from squandering endless hours trying to fulfill someone else's priorities at the expense of your own.
- ◆ Your time off should be just that. Don't force yourself to do chores during your lunch time or work breaks. Give yourself a real break.
- ◆ Be yourself. You have enough challenges in the world without trying to fit someone else's mold.



**TAKE OFF POUNDS  
SENSIBLY**

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