

Exercise Strategies for Conquering Stress

God wants to bless you with the peaceful joy of a stress-free life. As a matter of fact, God promises to strengthen your body and to give peace to your mind and soul. The Bible says, "The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace (Ps. 29:11, NKJV).

A powerful strategy for conquering stress is exercise. Exercise provides an extremely beneficial avenue for releasing pent-up stress and negative emotions. Instead of allowing stress to tear down your body, you can actually use stress to an advantage.

A good workout can dissipate and leave you feeling great. Let's look at some exercises you can do to conquer stress so that it never conquers you, including some relaxation exercises that will help you unwind.

Three-Minute Relaxation Routine

This relaxation routine takes only three minutes, but it can be a lifesaver in a tense situation.

1. Concentrate on relaxing using a cue word, such as God's peace or God's love. Listen to your own breathing, and take in one deep breath and hold it in.
2. While you are holding your breath, tense up a group of muscles, such as the muscles in your face, legs or arms.
3. As you release the breath, relax the tense muscle group. Feel all your tension slip away. Drop your shoulders down and rotate them in a circle.
4. Repeat.

You can do this relaxation exercise while you're at work or at home. Learning to relax takes practice. Relaxation training

reduces anxiety and stress, and it decreases heart disease and high blood pressure.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

In this relaxation exercise, you must tighten each muscle group in your body, hold it for five seconds, and then gradually release the muscles and relax them for 10 to 15 minutes. Relaxing your entire body through this technique will take about 20 minutes.

1. Sit or lie down quietly in a comfortable position away from noise or distractions.
2. Scan your body to identify areas of stress or tension.
3. Begin to tense and tighten your muscles in each of the following muscle groups, beginning at your head. Tense each body part for five seconds, and then slowly release the tension as you focus on the body part. This needs to be repeated twice for each muscle group. As you learn to slowly release the tension in your muscles, you will actually be teaching your body how to relax.
3. Forehead and top of head—raise eyebrows
4. Jaw—clench teeth
5. Neck—pull chin forward onto your chest
6. Shoulders and trapezoid muscles—lift shoulders
7. Back—pull back shoulder blades
8. Arms—flex biceps
9. Abdomen—tighten abdomen
10. Buttocks—squeeze and tighten buttocks
11. Thighs—flex thighs
12. Calves—Flex and point toes up or down

Melt Away Stress

Essential oils can be added directly to your bath water. Here's how:

3. Add 5-10 drops of essential oils to hot water while

filling your bath

4. Do not combine essential oils with other bath oils or soap
5. Make sure to soak in the tub for at least 20 minutes to get the aromatic benefits

You can find essential oils at health food stores.

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