

Happy Hormones  
FOR LIFE



# STRESS REDUCTION



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We all have stress in our lives – even if you are the most chilled laid back person out there, your body still has stresses to deal with. A stress to the body can be anything that is deemed a threat to our survival – this includes the obvious, like overwhelm, fear, anger and upset. But it also includes toxins in our environment, the food we eat and how much sleep we get.

Elevated stress hormones over time can raise blood pressure, increase fat stores, decrease energy, suppress immunity, impair digestion and sex hormone function. All of this can cause PMS, digestive issues, frequent infections, insomnia, fertility problems, depression, fat around the middle, fatigue, brain fog, mood swings and higher risk of heart disease and diabetes.

This is serious. If you don't prioritize stress management in your life, your chances of a good healthy old age are pretty slim... (even if you have the best diet in the world!).

And you could be heading for adrenal fatigue; wiped out and exhausted. That's what can happen if you let chronic stress go on for too long.

We can't avoid stress, but rest and relaxation allows the body to recover. If you are a high achiever type, take note that recent studies have shown that the more rest you get and the less hours you work, the more productive you are!

There are lots of options and I know it's not easy to make relaxation a priority if your life is busy, but you need to find whatever it is that works for you and make it part of your routine – no excuses

## Here are some things that are proven to help reduce stress and balance cortisol:

- 1. Breathing** – deep breathing from your belly, helps to re-set your stress hormones, which helps with weight loss, anxiety, mood and brain function! With one hand on your belly, inhale through the nose to a count of 5, pushing your belly up and breathing into the lower part of your lungs. As you breathe out for 5, slowly feel your belly fall. Do this 10 times, once or twice a day, or whenever you feel stressed.

This is a [great guide to breathing techniques](#). Alternate nostril breathing is an ancient technique to reduce anxiety – click [here](#).

- 2. Mindfulness** – silencing the chatter in your mind and being mindful (concentrating on the task in hand, being present) - has huge benefits for your overall health. You can also try mindful eating, walking, driving, commuting, travelling on a train, brushing teeth, whatever you're doing works. Here is a [simple guide](#) to help you get started. Download the 5 minute mindfulness track we have provided, or check out [Headspace](#) if you want to try an alternative.
- 3. Yoga** – for me is a double whammy – great exercise and a huge stress reducer. The trick is to find a class that suits you. There are many styles and teachers so classes vary hugely. You may hate one and love another. So stick with it! Here's a [handy guide](#) to the different types.
- 4. Nature, walking, grounding** – getting outside into nature, getting some sun if you can, going for a walk, taking your shoes off and connecting with the ground - all great for reducing cortisol levels. Here's a great [article](#) on getting outside.
- 5. Hobbies** – music, relaxation tapes, reading, gardening, cooking, Scrabble – whatever you love doing, do more of it!
- 6. Seeing friends** has been shown to have a huge impact on our cortisol levels. Having good friends and a support network is a huge stress reliever. Note the 'good' friends bit – people that bring you down and drain you are definitely not going to help your cortisol levels – dump them if you can, seriously.
- 7. Laughter** – put on a funny film instead of watching the news. Or try laughter yoga. Here are some more [tips](#).
- 8. Reading** – one of the easiest and fastest ways to reduce stress (and a great one to make you sleepy). Just six minutes has been shown to be effective.
- 9. Massage** – sounds like a luxury? Having a 15-minute massage once a week has actually been shown to reduce cortisol, lower blood pressure and increase serotonin and dopamine.
- 10. Take your holidays!** – so many of you are working way too hard, long hours, weekends and some of you are not even taking your holiday allowance! If that's the only time you switch off, then make sure you book your time off work in advance and stick to it. You don't have to go away on holiday, just take a break from your work environment (and emails!).
- 11. Try a total digital detox** – just for one day a week (it's hard I know!) but so good to give your system a break.

# Ommmmm... the benefits of meditation

What do you think of when you hear the word 'meditation'? Super stretchy people sitting cross legged chanting?



Well, meditation doesn't have to be like that. It can just be a moment of mindfulness, standing on a train or walking in a park. Just a few minutes a day of clearing your mind of clutter can make all the difference.

Listen to the mindfulness tracks we have provided or alternatively, try this. Sit in a comfortable position, close your eyes and concentrate on noticing your breath come in and out. If you have a thought, notice it, and let it float away. Sit quietly like this for 10 minutes or as long as you can. Do it daily.

These are the things meditation has been shown to help with:

- Lowering your heart rate and reduce your blood pressure.
- Reducing stress hormones (cortisol and adrenalin), switching on our parasympathetic nervous system – the rest and repair function.
- Improving your mood
- Boosting creativity
- Relieving pain
- Reducing anxiety
- Boosting immunity
- Increasing fertility and sex drive
- Reducing IBS symptom
- Reducing inflammation
- Improving sleep
- Reducing binge and emotional eating, promoting weight loss

If you want to learn how to do it properly, find a class locally or online. Here's a great [video guide](#) on how to meditate to get you started.

## **Meditation programmes:**

[21 day meditation for weight loss](#) by Jon Gabriel

[Inner Balance](#) – uses HeartMath breathing technology to get your heart rate in 'coherence'

[Meditation Oasis](#) – free meditation downloads

## **Further reading;**

[Rushing Woman's Syndrome](#) by Libby Weaver

[The Stress Cure](#) by Patrick Holford