

TopSAFETY™

Safety Around the Clock

SPECIAL ISSUE

STRESS CONNECTIONS

“TALK BACK” to Worry

Worry seems to be widespread these days, and stress is taking its toll. What is worry? It's interest on a debt you may never owe. It's suffering in an imaginary life while the real one passes you by. What is worry really worth?

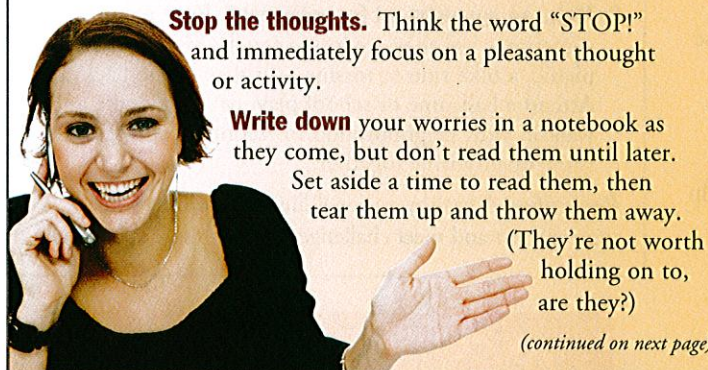
Is something weighing heavily on your heart and mind? Ask yourself: Can I control this thing I'm worried about? If the answer is yes, ask yourself, what do I want to happen? What are some of the ways I might make it happen? Decide which of these choices is the best. (If you're not sure, pick one at random.) Then do it.

If you can't control the situation causing your worry, the following techniques may help:

Take the “Busy Bee” approach. Get involved in an activity to push your worries aside. Activities in which you are physically and/or mentally active (talking to a friend, gardening) are usually more distracting than passive activities such as watching TV.

Learn to let go of and accept what you can't change. Devote your energy to the things in life that you can change!

Practice relaxation techniques. Try deep breathing, “mini-vacations,” muscle tension/relaxation or meditation.



Stop the thoughts. Think the word “STOP!” and immediately focus on a pleasant thought or activity.

Write down your worries in a notebook as they come, but don't read them until later.

Set aside a time to read them, then tear them up and throw them away.

(They're not worth holding on to, are they?)

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STRESS MATTERS

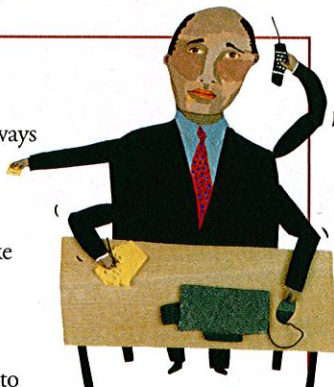
Stress is a part of life. And while it's not always a bad thing, too much of it can be hazardous to your health. When stressful matters go unresolved, they can keep you awake at night, lead to depression and make you more vulnerable to illness as well as frequent backache and headache.

More resources are online

to help you control stress. Go to

www.personalbest.com/extras/special09 to find a Special Edition Online Supplement and more helpful articles.

Plus, take a QuikRisk Self-Assessment.



EXERCISE Puts You in a Good Mood

Regular exercise changes your body for the better — you probably know this. Some of those effects can significantly improve your mental health too. Researchers believe physical activity helps regulate the brain chemicals that elevate mood and control stress. Clinical studies show that exercise reduces anxiety and nervous tension as it leads to relaxation. *Some facts:*

Cuts symptoms of depression. Aerobic activity can be as effective as antidepressant medication in treating mild depression. A study published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine showed that 30 to 40 minutes of aerobic exercise three to five times a week cut symptoms of minor to moderate depression nearly in half.

Increases mental well-being. Data on nearly 20,000 adults in the Scottish Health Survey showed that sports and vigorous activities yielded the greatest psychological benefits — and the longer the duration of activity the greater the increase in mental well-being.

Boosts your spirits. Even short periods of physical activity, such as gardening or a brief walk, can have an immediate positive effect on your mood.

To Help Relieve Stress

- Fit in three or four 10-minute exercise breaks at 90-minute intervals — this is a natural work-break period that will recharge you mentally and physically and burn about as many calories as a solid 30- or 40-minute exercise session. Work-break activities can be as simple as walking, climbing stairs, stretching or pushups.
- Think about your exercise environment and how it affects your mood. For example, you may prefer solo workouts more than crowded exercise classes if you are surrounded by a lot of people at your job. If you work alone, however, the social benefit of group exercise can be healthy.



10 Ways to Be a POSITIVE FORCE

- 1 Think before you speak.
- 2 Keep an open mind.
- 3 Discuss rather than argue.
- 4 Cultivate a soothing voice — how you speak often means more than what you say.
- 5 Never lose an opportunity to praise or say a kind word.
- 6 Exceed your employer's expectations.
- 7 Learn to be objective about personal criticism.
- 8 Respect the feelings of others; take time to show interest in their lives and families.
- 9 Refuse to discuss the shortcomings of others — discourage gossip and change the subject.
- 10 Let your virtues speak for themselves.

"TALK BACK"... (continued)

Talk back to worry by asking:

- What's the worst thing that could happen?
- Although I don't want it to happen, could I survive it? How?
- How likely is it that my worst fear will happen?
- What proof do I have?
- What are some of the possible good outcomes?
- Of all the times I've worried, what percentage of the time have my worries come true?
- When my fears did come true, what did I gain by worrying ahead of time?

BREATHING LESSONS

Learn mindful breathing — it's soothing and energizing.

As practiced through the ages, controlled breathing can help increase energy, ease stress and improve physical functioning. This may improve digestion, circulation, blood pressure and pulse as well as harmony of mind and body.

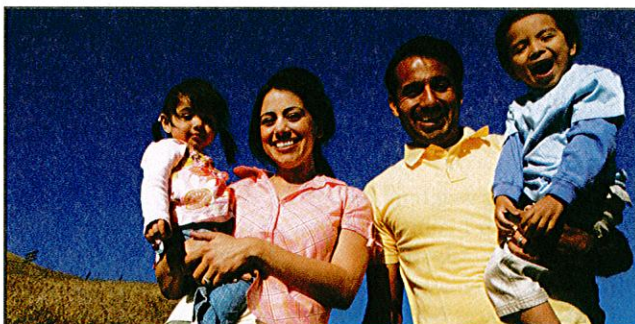
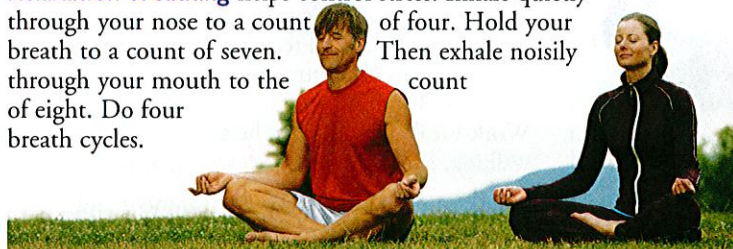
In the audio "Breathing: The Master Key to Self-Healing," Andrew Weil, MD, reviews basic breathing techniques. Try these routines for a few minutes twice a day, sitting in a quiet place.

Deep belly breathing helps increase the relaxation effect of controlled breathing. Place one hand on your stomach. Take a deep breath and feel your stomach expand. Hold for a few seconds, then slowly exhale. **Tip:** Try exhaling first; it may help you take deeper breaths.

Bellows breathing helps raise energy and increase alertness. Rapidly breathe in and out through your nose, keeping your mouth slightly closed. Start with 15 seconds and gradually build up to 60 seconds.

Slow, quiet, deep breathing helps reduce anger or anxiety. Try making your breaths slower, deeper, quieter and more regular.

Relaxation breathing helps control stress. Inhale quietly through your nose to a count of four. Hold your breath to a count of seven. Then exhale noisily through your mouth to the count of eight. Do four breath cycles.



Dealing With Family Stress

Even a happy family goes through unhappy times when time seems too short and stress tightens its grip. **Take heart:** You can take steps toward a happier and healthier family life.

1. **Communicate more.** Refrigerator magnets, a corkboard in the kitchen, a whiteboard in the front hall ... use whatever works for you. Create a place where family members can share thoughts from the day, post messages, or display school papers and artwork.
2. **Make an appointment for enjoyment.** Busy parents may sometimes feel they are losing touch. Make a date for a picnic, a bike ride or tossing a Frisbee in the backyard. Attend a ballgame or school play, or simply take a walk in your neighborhood to reconnect and spend some quality time together.

Remember: A healthy personal life can also help you control stress and meet challenges at work more successfully.

STAY CONNECTED

Spending quality time with family, friends and co-workers, as well as neighbors and acquaintances, is a very healthy habit. Take time to gather and celebrate, attend religious services or community activities, exchange ideas, offer warm greetings and hugs, and maybe lend a supportive shoulder. Many studies show that when you have social support, satisfying relationships and community involvement you generally are healthier. On the other hand, people who lose or lack social ties have a higher risk for depression, mental decline and even early death.

STRESS CONNECTIONS: More stress management tools are at www.personalbest.com/extras/special09.