

NUTRITION TIPS

FOR A HEALTHY STRESS RESPONSE

Stress can be triggered by changes in our environment, our body, or our thoughts. Our body is designed to deal with stress and there are things we can do to support a healthy stress response.

Our fight or flight response

Stress can be positive, keeping us alert, motivated, and ready to deal with danger



Muscles tense, blood flow to the muscles increases, heart races, breath goes faster



Magnesium relaxes tension

Green leafy veg, nuts and seeds, legumes

Epsom salt bath



Vitamin C supports our adrenal glands and helps protect the immune system

Kiwis, peppers, parsley



Black tea may speed up recovery from stress

Green tea

Chamomile tea



Omega 3s improve our adaptation to stress

Oily fish, flaxseeds, walnuts



Exercise boosts endorphins and takes your focus away from stressful thoughts

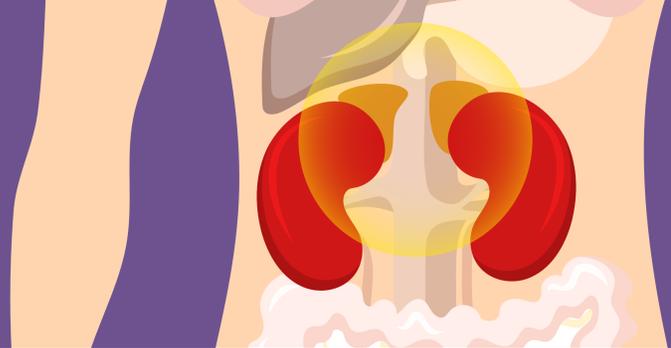


Try herbs such as St John's Wort (not alongside antidepressants)

Valerian root



Our adrenal glands release hormones adrenaline, noradrenaline, cortisol



Stress becomes negative when it builds up over time, causing wear and tear both physical and emotional. This can eventually lead to physical symptoms, or compulsive behaviours linked to food, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, shopping...



Potassium helps lower blood pressure

Raw veggies to chew on, avocado, spinach



B Vitamins may improve our perceived stress levels

Whole grains, meat, eggs, legumes

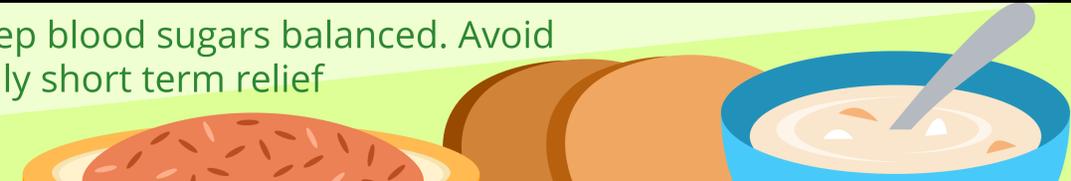


Take **regular breaks** to prevent stress from building up



Complex carbs boost serotonin and keep blood sugars balanced. Avoid sugar and refined carbs, they provide only short term relief

Porridge, brown rice, rye bread



Stress and the 'Gut-brain' axis: it's more than a gut feeling!

- 1. Look after your gut bacteria:** they help regulate your stress response but are also altered by chronic stress.
- 2. Include fermented foods rich in probiotics**
- 3. Avoid high fat diets** as they are a risk factor for gut inflammation and affect our stress response.
- 4. Short chain fatty acids are key** to gut-brain communication. We get them from:
 - Lots of veggies
 - Garlic, leeks, onion
 - Green bananas, (cold) potato salad, legumes
 - Apples, apricots, oranges, carrots
 - Cheese and butter (in moderation)



Increases...

Headaches, blood pressure, inflammation, risk of heart disease and diabetes

Weakens / damages...

Bones, muscles, immune system, digestion, sleep, libido and fertility, breathing

BUILDING RESILIENCE

Challenges are what make life interesting; overcoming them is what makes life meaningful
-Joshua J. Marine

Throughout our lives, our mental and emotional resilience are put to the test. Things that don't go as we'd hoped, but also the many daily pressures we face, from difficult conversations to cognitive overload. The good news is that mental toughness, also often known as 'grit', is a skill we can cultivate and build.

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

1. Ability to 'bounce back'

2. A dynamic learning process, something you can practise

3. Associated with positive states, such as optimism, zest, curiosity, energy and openness to experience

4. Psychological capital (hope, optimism, self-efficacy)
Victor mentality, opposite of victim mentality

5. Characteristics include cognitive skills, personality, problem-solving ability, self-regulation and adaptability to stress

BENEFITS

1. Provides a buffer against stress

2. Greater life satisfaction

3. Creates a positive feedback cycle - growth mindset

4. The ability to cope and even thrive in the face of adversity

5. Associated with improved physical health and wellbeing, longevity

HOW DO YOU DEVELOP RESILIENCE?

<p>PERSPECTIVE</p> <p>Placing the situation in a wider context</p>	<p>MINDSET</p> <p>Viewing obstacles as opportunities for growth</p> <p>'Fail forward'</p>	<p>PURPOSE</p> <p>Finding meaning, contributing to the greater good can buffer against stress</p>	<p>RELATIONSHIPS</p> <p>Giving / asking for support from colleagues, family and friends</p>
<p>MINDFULNESS</p> <p>Developing awareness of thought patterns and the way we respond to adversity</p>	<p>STOP MULTI-TASKING</p> <p>Focus on one thing at a time for a sustained period, around 30 to 50 minutes without distractions</p>	<p>WORK-LIFE BALANCE</p> <p>Switching-off outside of work and removing yourself mentally and physically from it</p>	<p>KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS</p> <p>Helps develop a clearer sense of direction, higher self-confidence and productivity</p>
<p>GETTING ENOUGH SLEEP</p> <p>Your brain cleans itself out when you sleep, by "deleting" the synaptic connections you don't use. Helps reduce overwhelm</p>	<p>EXERCISE</p> <p>Take frequent movement breaks</p> <p>stretch</p> <p>walk</p> <p>30mins a day exercise to boost mood</p>	<p>FOCUS ON PROGRESS, NOT GOALS</p> <p>Acknowledging your progress, no matter how small, feeds into your brain's reward system, producing dopamine, and building resilience to setbacks</p>	<p>NUTRITION & HYDRATION</p> <p>Support mood and energy levels:</p> <p>Protein rich snacks: nuts, seeds, hummus & crudites, oatcakes and cottage cheese</p> <p>Drink 2l of water a day</p>

VISUALISATION FOR GAINING PERSPECTIVE

1. Imagine the place you currently exist and slowly zoom out of yourself.

2. Zoom out of the building you're in, out of the place, out of the country and the continent.

3. Then zoom out further all the way through the ozone layer until you reach the moon and you can see the whole earth.

4. Now think about your problem again: how big is it really? what does it look like from outer space?

AND BREATHE...

The benefits of incorporating breathing exercises into your daily routine are wide reaching. Some well-researched advantages include:

Enhancing listening skills

Supporting resilience

Improving focus - helps to reset and spot new solution

Enhancing our capacity to embrace change and manage stress

Enabling us to consider before we react

A simple breathing exercise to get you started...

Get comfortable in your chair, make sure your feet are flat on the floor so you are grounded to the earth and your back is straight but not rigid. You could rest your palms in your lap if that feels relaxing.

Take some normal breaths in and out through your nose and begin to feel relaxed. Try and relax your shoulders and if you feel comfortable you can close your eyes. Take a few moments to check in with what is going on in your body. Do you feel any sensations or tension anywhere? Consider your chest, belly, legs, hands, feet etc. If you do, bring your awareness to that area, and continue to breathe into the sensations you feel. Allow the breath to flow freely to any area you may feel tension in.

Once your awareness is with your breath try this short exercise:

1 Draw long slow inhales through both nostrils for as long as is comfortable.

2 Relax the shoulders and encourage the movement of the breath to be in the lower abdominals and ribcage

3 Soften the jaw

4 Hold the breath - for as long as is comfortable - at no point should this feel difficult

5 Consciously relax your jaw, throat, neck, shoulders, diaphragm, and abdominal muscles

6 The more relaxed you are the easier it will be to hold your breath.

7 Exhale through both nostrils for as long as comfortable

Repeat 5 rounds.