

40 ways to relax

Now that you know that constant stress will do you no good – perhaps even aggravate the situation and make you feel physically sick and depressed – your only option is to hang loose.

If you are too preoccupied with your current situation to figure out how to do this, take these 40 tips from medical professionals Mind Your Body consulted.

They give advice on how to unwind, lessen physical strain and mental stress and tell you how you can relax.

Ms Sanveen Kang, a clinical psychologist at the Institute of Mental Health, said: "Never dismiss stress; instead, learn to cope and tackle the problems one by one." Her other tips:

- 1 Seek help. Talk to a friend, family member, co-worker, counsellor, psychologist or someone you trust.
- 2 Focus on what you have accomplished and derive a sense of satisfaction from it.
- 3 Do not dwell on work that is incomplete as it will only demoralise you.
- 4 Do stretches in the office to relieve tension accumulated from sitting down for a long time.

5 Exercise regularly. It helps with sleep problems and improves blood circulation and detoxification through perspiration. Exercise has been shown to release a chemical in the brain which induces the feeling of well-being and relaxation.

6 Enrol in stress management talks, workshops and programmes.

7 Go travelling with your loved ones as it can help you return with a fresh perspective on life.

Dr Gregory Chan, a senior occupational health physician at the National University of Singapore, said: "Relaxing

in the workplace is not only about things you can do but also an attitude with which you approach work." His other tips:

8 Draw up a list of items that you need to finish at work at the beginning of the day.

9 You can choose to be happy and positive at work. For example, smile more and respond positively to new assignments.

10 Focus on the job at hand.

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Cut the gossip and keep positive at work

11 Do not keep checking your e-mail every few minutes; it will distract you.

12 Make sure your work station is comfortable and adjusted to your personal needs.

- The screen should be at eye level.
- Adjust the chair so that your elbows rest comfortably on the chair and your feet are flat on the ground.
- Do not sit on the edge of your chair.
- Get some back support.

13 Keep your desk free of clutter and tidy up after work.

14 Avoid gossiping about others.

15 Be friendly to everyone (but do not overdo it).

16 Listen to some soothing music without disturbing your colleagues.

17 Take short breaks after continuous work; you should not do more than one hour of continuous work.

18 Tell your body to relax while working; it is about mind over body. Check if you are tense because you tend to use muscles that are not necessary in the course of work.

19 Learn to say "no" if you have far too much to do already.

20 Have regular meals to avoid gastric problems and squeeze in some exercise no matter how short. For example, take the stairs instead of the lift.

21 Try not to bring work home.

22 Ensure that you drink enough fluids – water is best but not fizzy or alcoholic drinks.

23 Do not be overly preoccupied with promotion or competition.

24 Even if your work seems boring, look for positive aspects and enjoy working.

25 Give your best effort at work.

Psychologist Daniel Koh of Insights–Tse counselling clinic said: "Find more sedentary and easy going things to do as exercise may vent frustration but may not mean you will be more relaxed." His other tips:

26 Breathing exercises. These can be done with your eyes open or closed and either sitting or lying down.

- Begin by placing your hand on your diaphragm and breathe in slowly and deeply.
- When exhaling, imagine that you are breathing out all your tension and troubles.
- Repeat until you feel calm and relaxed.

27 Imagery or visualisation. Start with the above breathing exercise but add on visualisation.

Imagine that you are walking in a forest or along a beach. Think about how you would feel and what you would see or hear. When you begin to feel relaxed, start focusing on your breathing.

Avoid gossiping about others and do not be overly preoccupied with promotion or competition.