



Med

express

Natural Healing Series

Natural Holistic Therapies  
for Common Ailments

# overcoming stress



BayArea  
NewsGroup



# Overcoming stress

**NOTE**

This publication is intended to provide reference information for the reader on the covered subject. It is not intended to replace personalized medical diagnosis, counseling, and treatment from a doctor or other healthcare professional.

**Before taking any form of treatment you should always consult your physician or medical practitioner.**

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Published by:  
Standard International Print Group

Overcoming Stress  
@ Standard International Print Group

Publisher  
Simon St. John Bailey

Editor-in-chief  
Isabel Toyos

Digital Production  
Christian Bailey

Photos  
@ Standard International Print Group, @ Getty Images, @  
Jupiter Images, @ Plainstock, @ J. Alonso

Includes Index  
ISBN 9781600810206BAN

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November 2017 Edition

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# What is stress?

Stress is the way our body reacts to tension, anxiety and the taxing activities we must face in everyday life. When the pressures put on our bodies become excessive, we sometimes suffer from sickness and other symptoms.



✚ The word “stress” refers to the body’s condition, which becomes strained when trying to adapt itself to challenging daily activities.

When a person deals with pressure, physical or psychological, the body gets overstimulated and tries to prevent itself from becoming worn out. Over time, our bodies learn how to optimize a response to increased activity. This adaptation is known as “good stress”, the benefits of which accompany us all of our lives. It is necessary for physiological development and for adapting to our environments. When pressures on the mind or body are excessive, intense or prolonged, and are more than the body can handle,

it becomes “distressed” and attempts to manage this “bad stress”. When your body gets to this point, any overstimulation can provoke malfunctions or illnesses.

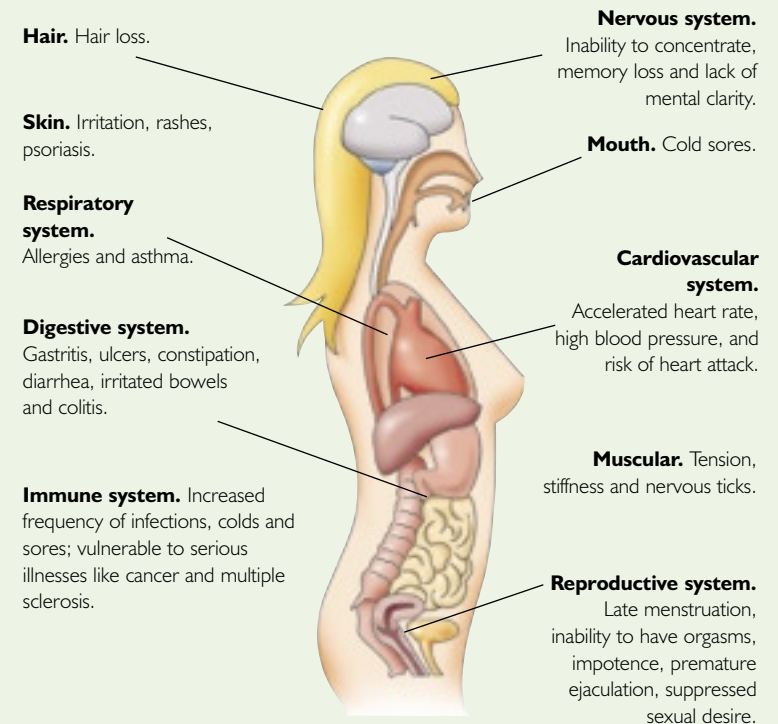
## WHAT HAPPENS TO YOUR BODY?

When dealing with stress, the brain stimulates the secretion of adrenaline. This chemical goes to the kidneys and triggers a process in which stored glycogen is converted into glucose,

increasing the flow of blood. Your blood pressure goes up, your breathing accelerates (to increase the intake of oxygen) and your digestion is affected. When your body repeats this chemical process regularly over time, it becomes chronic.

At that point, any type of stimulant –even slight excitement– can cause disproportionate effects, which wear out the body. Stress is not an illness. It is a defense mechanism your body uses, but if this defense mechanism becomes chronic you become more vulnerable to illness.

## SYMPTOMS AND PHYSICAL ILLNESSES CAUSED BY STRESS



# Are you stressed out?

To find it out, answer the questions by marking the boxes and add up the results.

	Always	Never	Sometimes
1. Do you get irritated when things don't go as you planned?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. In your interactions with people, do you feel as if they are rude or aggressive?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Do you get impatient when waiting (in lines, to do errands, or for answers)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do you feel guilty when things go wrong?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Do you stay late at your workplace to finish tasks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Do you get nervous around authority figures, managers and/or your boss?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Do you participate in creative activities outside your daily work activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Can you take time to reflect on your life and your problems without interruptions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Do you exercise often, at least two or three times per week?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Do you have places that are restful or peaceful to escape to?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Do you smoke more than half a pack of cigarettes per day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. On a daily basis, do you eat whole grains, fresh fruit and vegetables?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Do you feel as if you have support from your friends and family when you are afraid, angry and/or happy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	Always	Never	Sometimes
14. Is your sex life stimulating?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Do you suffer from headaches or back pains?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Do you often suffer from colds or slight illnesses?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Do you have allergy attacks?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Do you have stomach or intestinal problems?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Do you suffer from accelerated heart rate or heart palpitations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Do you sweat when it is cold?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Do you sleep well?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Do you suffer from emotional spells or mood swings that are hard to control?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Do you often take pain pills, sleeping pills or tranquilizers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24. Do you feel indifferent or far away from what is going on around you?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25. Are you often tired?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Your results

- Give yourself **0** points if you answered NEVER to questions numbered 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24 and 25; and if you answered ALWAYS to questions numbered 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 21.
- Give yourself **1** point for every question which you answered SOMETIMES.
- Give yourself **2** points if you answered ALWAYS to questions numbered 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24; and if you answered NEVER to questions numbered 3, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 21.

**Less than 25 points.** Normal stress level, which is enough to keep you alert and to manage with daily activities. You are not at risk of illnesses.

**Between 25 and 35 points.** You are at moderate risk from suffering from distress or "bad stress". Try to change your daily habits and identify what activities increase your stress level (see *Negative daily habits* box on page 9).

**Between 36 and 50 points.** High stress level. It's highly suggested that you seek immediate advice for proper treatment to help lower stress in your daily activities.

# How to fight stress

To fight stress it's important for you to set clear goals and learn how to choose appropriate activities for a healthy life style. You should change unhealthy habits, receive proper medical treatment and make use of alternative therapies and natural health remedies.



✚ The way we react in a troublesome situation varies from person to person. Some can resist and confront problems easily, while others hide and freeze up when they must deal with their troubles. Some of us feel completely defenseless when we are worried. Stress is not an objective condition, we all react to it in different ways. Managing your life depends on the capability of just one person, yourself. Your mental state constantly looks for ways out of negative situations, taking note of preconceptions and changing habits.

## SAFETY

It's recommended that, if you are managing a lot of stress daily, you take your blood pressure periodically to detect and prevent high blood pressure.

## TYPES OF STRESS AND SOLUTIONS

We must deal with diverse levels of stress. All types of stress deserve attention, but while stress can be slight, other types require immediate care.

■ **Circumstantial stress.** This is the type of stress which everyone must deal with from time to time, such as a meeting, deadline at work, or taking an examination. In general, we benefit from this type of stress because it generates enthusiasm, excitement and pressures which help us grow and become more active. Most of the time you can control circumstantial stress. If you carry a balanced routine, you can lead a healthy life while dealing with this type of stress.

■ **Excessive stress.** We suffer from this type of stress when dealing with constant and excessive tension. It's important to put limits on external pressures so that your mental and physical state do not become affected. Natural holistic remedies can be particularly helpful in relieving and preventing stress. However, you should keep in mind that natural remedies only work when accompanied by a healthy lifestyle.

### NEGATIVE DAILY HABITS

- Smoking, drinking alcohol, coffee or any other stimulant.
- Leading a sedentary lifestyle.
- Living in constant tension.
- Not taking time for leisure activities and to have fun.
- Eating an unbalanced diet.

### NATURAL HOLISTIC REMEDIES

- Practice yoga and meditate.
- Massages and stress relieving do-it-yourself massages, shiatsu, reflexology, qi gong exercises.
- Anti-stress tonics and herbs.
- Aromatherapy.
- Eat foods that benefit the nervous system.



**EMOTIONAL SYMPTOMS**

- Irritability.
- Insomnia.
- Apathy.
- Mood swings.
- Inability to concentrate.
- Impulsive behavior.
- Crying fits.
- Nightmares.
- Hyperactivity.
- Anxiety.
- Compulsive behavior.
- Addictions.

■ **Chronic stress.** If you suffer from chronic stress you should seek professional help, because the pressures you deal with are constant and incompatible with a healthy life. Sometimes, we are so used to living under intense external pressures that we are not aware that we suffer from the side-effects of stress. Personal conflicts, marital problems, over-demanding tasks at work which you are not equipped for, problems with your kids and/or difficult living conditions can trigger chronic stress. These types of personal conflicts put your physical and mental health at risk. If you suffer from this third type of stress you should surely seek medical and psychological attention.

**A CHANGE OF ATTITUDE**

Stress can affect you at any stage of your life and at any age. One of the most common causes of stress is pressure at the workplace, which has become more and more demanding in a time when multi-tasking and workaholicism are expected of us. Luckily, there are ways to reorganize how you delegate your time and strategize task completion. These strategies can help you get your work done while maintaining a low-stress level.

Those of us who can maintain a healthy equilibrium while under pressure in general have greater facility to organize and manage external pressures. This is why it is important for you to learn how to prevent stress.



Many of us also suffer from “domestic” stress or pressure at home. Most commonly over-dedicated mothers and wives, who leave little time for rest and recreational activities, suffer from “domestic” stress. Also, interpersonal conflicts (between couples and between parents and children) are another major source of stress, and deserve attention because they sometimes cover up more serious psychological problems that require professional help.

Women and men react to stress differently. It's proven that in certain situations of tension, women are affected less than men. Although, in general, women suffer more from stress because their tasks are more consuming.

Whatever may be the case or circumstance, it is imperative for you to detect when you are under stress and spot what is causing your stress. For you to detect stress, it's helpful to make a list of physical, psychological and emotional symptoms which cause you distress in your daily activities, whether they are in your personal life or at work. And then compare them to the symptoms listed in the questions on pages 6 and 7. This will allow you to take note of your physical symptoms and determine whether you need medical attention.

Detecting symptoms will also permit you to reflect upon your mental state and, if necessary, seek psychological help. Alternative therapy, when accompanied by professional assistance, can help to alleviate stress. Following these recommendations you can begin a road to tranquility and a balanced lifestyle.

**CHILDREN AND STRESS**

Even though they are small, children live in an adult world. They also get stressed out when under pressure or when their parents are stressed. If this situation becomes continual or routine, youngsters get used to elevated levels of adrenaline. Children then feel uncomfortable or bored when they finally get a chance to calm down. Later in adult life, some of us put exceeding pressures on ourselves because we can't stand to be in a state of tranquility (something which we carry over from our childhood).

# Soothing Yoga

Yoga is a technique dating back thousands of years, which creates harmony between mind, body and spirit. There are specific positions that are especially used for helping us to relax our mind and body.



✦ Yoga is a method of learning that originated in India thousands of years ago through the practice of postures and techniques aimed to unite mind, body, and spirit through exercise, breathing, relaxation and meditation. The practice aims to improve your health, increase your resistance, and develop your mental awareness to unite your consciousness to the Universe's energy.

Yoga poses work on all the various systems of the body –brain, cells, muscles, glands, internal organs, nerves, and joints.

It increases your clarity and mental concentration, and prepares the body and mind for meditation, making it easier for you to achieve

a quiet mind and be free from everyday stress.

To fight stress it's ideal to practice complete yoga sessions at least two times per week. Many yoga poses (also known as *asanas*) and breathing techniques used in yoga are particularly helpful in bringing peace and balance to the body and mind which suffer from stress. These exercises or

poses can be done at any time, although it's best to do these exercises in the morning before starting your day.

## BREATHING IS VERY IMPORTANT

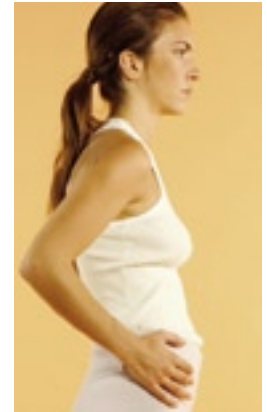
Practicing breathing is a very important element in yoga. It helps you maintain your balance and fight pain, because breathing is related to emotions. This is why taking deep breaths helps you calm down and feel better when you're upset.

## Quick relief

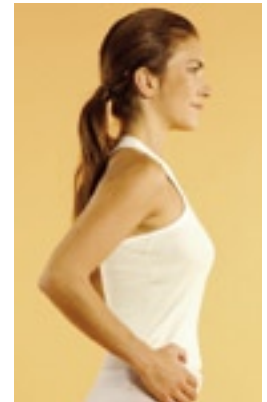
You can instantly alleviate stress by practicing abdominal breathing. By taking deep breaths your diaphragm moves down expanding your abdomen (see steps 1 and 2).

### WHEN YOU ARE TENSE

To practice proper abdominal breathing, begin by placing one of your hands on your chest and the other on your abdomen. Breath through your nose as indicated in the steps above. The hand on your abdomen will rise as oxygen fills your lungs pushing the diaphragm down and expanding your abdomen. But your hand on your chest should remain immobile. Exhale through your mouth. You can also practice this exercise when lying down, with a book placed on your abdomen. You will see the book rises as air expands your abdomen and then slowly descends as you exhale.



**1.** Take a deep breath, inhaling slowly through your nose and voluntarily expanding your abdomen.



**2.** Hold your breath for a few seconds. Then slowly exhale, releasing the air in twice the amount of time you took to inhale.

### HOW TO GET READY

Before practicing yoga positions or *asanas* you should first do stretching exercises as a way of warming your body up to get better results. You may be more comfortable using an exercise mat or exercising on a carpeted floor, especially if you suffer from back pain.

**1.** Sit with your legs crossed and lower your chin to your chest. Take the ball of your right foot in your left hand and vice versa. Bring your body forward, taking care to maintain your chin's position.



### The Rocking chair

You should always perform this position with your chin pressed to your chest (to prevent neck injuries). Breathe through your nose when you bring your body backward and exhale through your mouth as you move forward; this keeps your spinal cord from stiffening up and tones your muscles. Each time you exhale imagine that you are getting rid of negative energy.

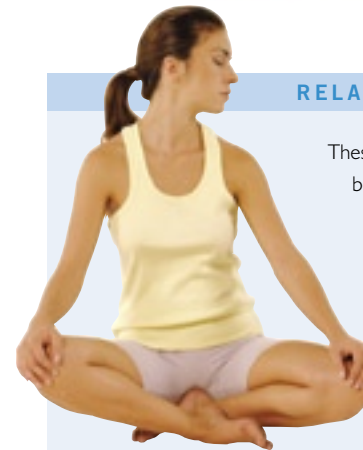
**2.** Lift your legs and bring your body backward. With very slow and controlled movements, place your back on the floor. You should use your abdomen to control your movements. You should feel each segment of your backbone pressing against the floor.

**3.** Continue to raise your legs above your head until you touch the floor with your toes. Lift your legs again, concentrating on your abdomen to control your movements, while exhaling. Your hands should stay placed on your toes. Repeat this step several times to stretch out your body.



### RELAXING YOUR NECK

These exercises are ideal to get rid of neck pains brought on by tension. You should always take deep breaths, inhaling through the nose and exhaling through the mouth.



- Sitting with your legs crossed, hands on your knees and back straight, turn your head to the right, without tensing up your shoulders. Slowly return your head back to the center and then move your head to the left.

- With your head centered and facing forward, move your head backward. You should feel the back of your neck close and your throat open. Continue by moving your head forward until your chin is pressed against your chest. Concentrate on how your neck feels as it stretches and your throat zone closes.



**GENTLE EXERCISE**

Yoga is a discipline designed to improve your flexibility and harmony. The exercises use gentle movements without straining your body. When practicing the asanas remember not to strain yourself. There is no need to push yourself too far. Through time and willpower, you will improve your body's health naturally and get in tune with your body.

**Relaxing your shoulders**

After a tense day, these exercises can help to relieve stiff shoulders. With your legs crossed and your back upright and straight:



**1.** Lift up your arms so that your elbows are pointed outward and aligned with your shoulders. Keep your hands relaxed and your wrists bent. Place the palms of your hands on your shoulders and bring your elbows bowed toward your chest, so that they touch.

Next, lift your elbows so that they are pointed up and then bring them down again, keeping your hands on your chest. Continue by slowly rolling your arms, always taking deep breaths—inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth.



**2.** With the palms of your hands on your knees, inhale through your nose and raise your shoulders; then lower them, exhaling through your mouth. Repeat several times.

**RELAXING ASANAS**

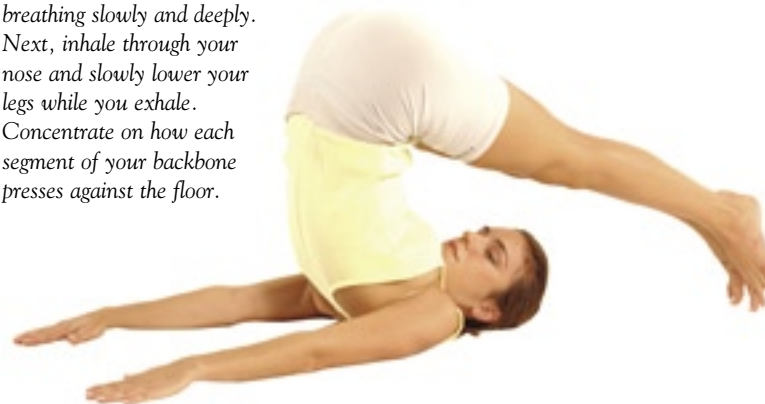
If yoga positions or *asanas* bring tranquility and harmony, the following positions are ideal for beginners to easily reach serenity.

**The Plow**

This *asana* is especially good to help you completely relax your body and mind.

**1.** Begin the position lying on your back, with your legs together, arms down by your sides next to your body and palms of your hands pressed against the floor. Bring your chin toward your chest and press your back muscles to the floor. Inhale through your nose and raise your legs up until they are at a 90 degree angle with your torso. Exhale, then inhale and bring your hips off the floor, supporting your back with your hands.

**2.** Without bending your knees, stretch out your legs by bringing them behind your head, until your toes touch the floor. Your arms should stay forward, with the palms of your hands pressed to the floor. Stay in this position breathing slowly and deeply. Next, inhale through your nose and slowly lower your legs while you exhale. Concentrate on how each segment of your backbone presses against the floor.



### The Bridge

This is an *asana* for the lower back region, it stretches the spinal column and relieves tensions where we most often store them: in the back.

1. Lie down, with your arms extended next to your body and your knees bent, feet together, keeping the balls of your feet pressed against the floor and as close to the buttocks as possible.



2. Tighten your buttocks and inhale while keeping your feet pressed to the floor; exhale while you lift up your hips, while keeping your knees pressed together and lifting your bellybutton as high as you can. Stay in this position inhaling and exhaling three times; each time you exhale try to lift your bellybutton higher.



### The Child

This *asana* relaxes the entire body and brings a sense of total well-being, while at the same time it helps bring on sleep.



1. Kneel down and sit on your feet with your heels pointing outward. Your knees should be separated, about the width of your hips. Inhale as you lift your arms above your head and exhale while you bring your torso down to your thighs. Place your forehead, palms of your hands and forearms on the floor, while keeping your shoulders relaxed.

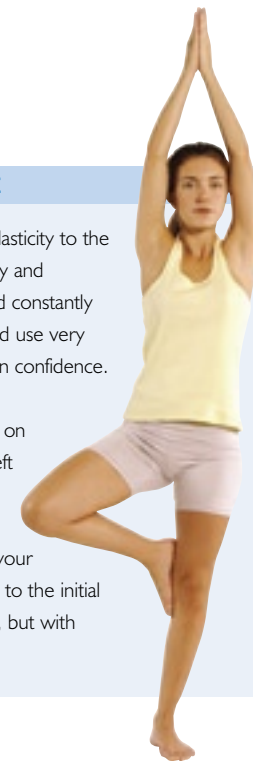


2. Next, bring your arms behind and keep them relaxed next to the body. Stay in this position for however long you like, breathing softly and keep your mind on your spinal column.

### THE TREE, A POSITION OF BALANCE

This position helps concentration, brings confidence and elasticity to the body. It also works with the body's balance, mental stability and spiritual harmony. It is practiced with your back straight and constantly looking forward. Always concentrate on your breathing and use very slow and controlled movements. Little by little you will gain confidence.

- Stand with your legs apart and putting all of your weight on your left foot. Place your right foot on the inside of your left thigh. Once you have balance, bring your hands together toward your chest, breathing slowly; while you inhale lift up your hands –always with your palms together– above your head. Stay in this position as long as you can. Next, return to the initial position by doing the steps backward. Repeat the position, but with your other leg.



## POSITIONS FOR MEDITATION

The following exercises, when done in a series, help you reach the Lotus *asana*. This pose, along with *Siddhasana*, improves circulation, brings serenity, harmony and promotes concentration.

### The Butterfly

Ideal for increasing flexibility in the legs.

**1.** Place your feet together and take them in your hands.

**2.** Slowly bring your torso forward, open and close your knees, imitating the flutter of a butterfly, slowly increasing the rhythm.

### The Flutter

This exercise helps you stretch out even more than the previous position.

**1.** Stretch out and spread your legs. Bend your right leg and place it on the thigh of your left leg, which should be stretched out.

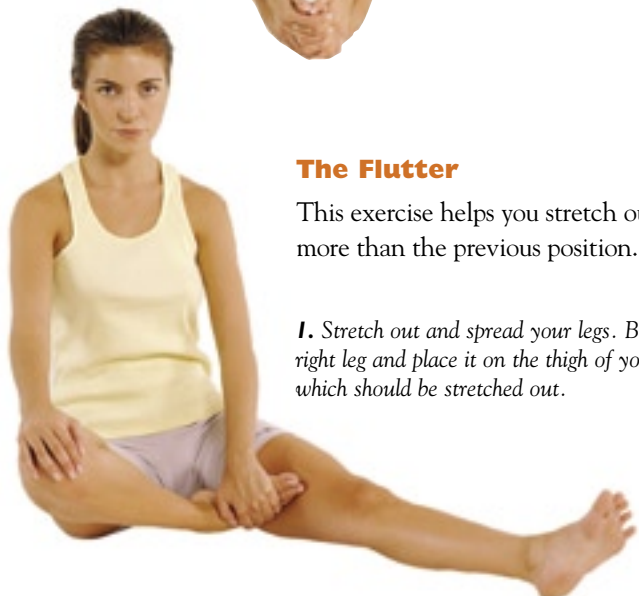


**2.** Take hold of the foot on your thigh, and with your other hand take hold of your knee, lowering it to stretch out the ligaments. Repeat both steps with your other leg.

### Siddhasana

Once you have acquired flexibility you may be able to practice this meditation *asana*.

Sit on the floor, with your legs in the form of a V and your hands placed on your knees. Bend your right leg, placing the ball of your foot against your left inner thigh. Next, bend your left leg and place the heel near your pubic bone.



## THE LOTUS

Sit on the floor with your legs spread out in the form of a V. Clasp hold of your right foot with both hands and bring it high onto the left thigh, up to the groin. Keep the ball of your right foot pointed upward and your right knee placed on the floor. Next, bring the left foot over the right and place the left foot in the groin. Cup your hands, with the tips of your middle finger and thumb touching. In this *mudra* or finger posture, the hands have a strong symbolic importance. The union between the fingers symbolizes your connection with universal knowledge and the search for union between one's own consciousness and the Universe. The Lotus yoga pose is a perfect meditation posture. You can also place your index finger and thumb together as a sign of the search for harmony and balance.



### Meditation

Lotus exercise helps us eliminate negative thoughts and calm the mind to build a connection with the here and now. When practiced, we reach a true sense of being alive, without memories, ideas, bad thoughts from the past or worries about the future. This state charges our bodies with energy and helps us reach a sense of transcendental meditation.



After you meditate, the way you see reality changes and your senses take on a new dimension, removed from fear, anxiety and worry.

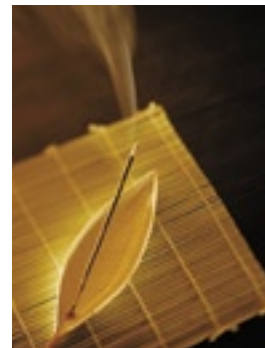
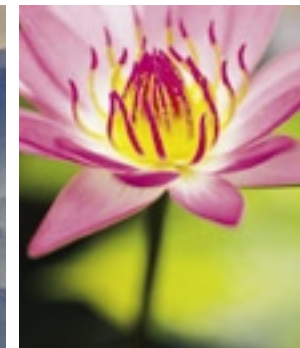
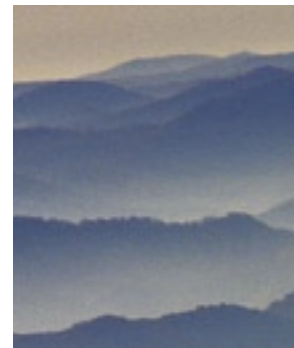
Meditation is a way for you to get away from your tensions and daily problems, to connect with your inner being and essence.

The *asanas* and breathing exercises in *Hatha* Yoga prepare our bodies for meditation. It is best to meditate in the morning or evening, in the Lotus posture, for 20 minutes: the palm of your hands cupped and pointed upward, with your middle finger pressed to your thumb forming the shape of an O. In this position, your arms only have one reason: your physical senses meet at the palms of your hands.

The practice of meditation aims to reverse the use of our senses, to not use them as we normally do. The objective is to eliminate external and internal interference and to tap into our vast sources of pure energy.

At the same time, while taking deep breaths internal sounds or *mantras* (*Om* is the best known) are practiced. The *mantra* creates a vibration, which impedes the flow of thoughts until they stand still. It's similar to controlling all interruptions in your mind.

These are all techniques which allow us to connect with the energy of the Universe. To achieve optimal results with meditation an instructor is necessary, at least when you begin.



# Comforting massages

Since ancient times, the caress has been used as an instinctive and basic way to relieve aches. Over time, techniques have been perfected which are useful to alleviate tension and stress.



✚ The word “massage”, which comes from the Greek root *masso* or *massein*, means to touch, handle, squeeze or knead. The technique uses friction, pressure and vibrations over the body’s surface to create a therapeutic effect. Massage therapy stimulates the muscle tissue, gets rid of toxins, relaxes the joints and increases the flow of oxygen and nutrients. The technique relaxes the entire body, relieving physical and emotional tensions. Massages also stimulate the production of

endorphins, which soothe and calm the body and mind, leaving pleasurable after effects. Do-it-yourself massages use conventional massage techniques and others based on Oriental techniques such as *shiatsu* and reflexology (see pages 38 and 40), which produce similar physical and mental benefits. Many of the techniques illustrated can be practiced at any time or place, giving immediate results.

## ESSENTIAL OILS

Massages are often given using essential oils with aromas naturally derived from plants and herbs. Essential oils also soften the skin and awaken the sense of smell, producing greater relaxation (see *Essential oils from A to Z* box, on page 43).



## BASIC TECHNIQUES

These are movements mostly known in the West, and form the basics of muscle relaxing massages and self-massages.

■ **Relaxing stroke or *effleurage*.** This technique creates warmth and relaxes the outer muscles. It is generally practiced at the beginning and end of a session. It’s done by gently rubbing the muscle with the palms of the hands.



■ **Kneading.** Taking part of the muscle and skin in your hands, moving back and forth, using your fingers and palm of your hands, as if you are kneading dough. This technique is ideal for alleviating tensions, especially in the shoulders, hips, buttocks and legs.



■ **Moving and pressing with the thumbs or *petrissage*.** Pressing with your thumbs, move in circular motions using steady and firm pressure. This makes your muscle tissues –when tense, hard and stuck together– “lift up” and loosen up. This technique is ideal for getting rid of knots in the muscles, especially for the muscles near the spinal column and shoulders.



■ **Percussion technique or *tapotement*.** This technique is ideal for stimulating and energizing the body. It’s done by giving slight taps on fleshy muscles with the edges of your hands and palms.

**Warning.** Do not use this technique over bones (ribs and spinal column).



## THE ANTI-STRESS MASSAGE

This is ideal for relieving daily tension. It's best to use these techniques as part of a complete routine to fight stress.

### IMPORTANT

When giving a massage, keep the back straight and use the weight of your body for rhythm and to control your movements.

- If you are working on a table, it's best to stand with your legs wide apart, slightly bending your knees, and bend when applying pressure.
- If you are working on the floor, kneel down with your legs apart. You can also support yourself kneeling on one knee and with your other foot on the floor. It's recommended that you change your position often.



**1.** Begin in the middle of the back (working toward the lower back). Massage downward pressing with your thumbs moving back and forth to loosen the tension in the muscles running parallel to the spinal column.



**2.** Continue with the effleurage technique to relax the muscles. Next, push with your fingertips and use a motion as if you are burying the fingertips of your other hand and vice versa. Repeat three times on each side.



**3.** To loosen the back muscles, massage down where the rhomboid and trapezius muscles meet, so that they lift up and the shoulder blades loosen. As you work on this area, the movements will relieve the knots and tensions in the muscles.

**4.** Using quick, circular movements, rub the back using both hands, starting from below and moving upward.



### CREATE A RELAXING ATMOSPHERE

When giving massages or self-massages: should be solid, not soft.

- Choose a quiet, warm and softly lighted atmosphere.
- You can put on relaxing music in the background.
- The surface on which the person receiving the massage is sitting or lying
- When giving massages, use loose clothing so that you can move freely.
- When you are receiving a massage, try to put your mind blank and allow your thoughts to disappear in order to fully relax.

### IF YOU ARE PREGNANT

Until the fourth month of pregnancy it is not recommended to give pregnant women massages. However, after the fourth month of pregnancy massages can be very beneficial and relaxing. Because lying on the stomach for a pregnant woman is not comfortable, she can lie on her side or back. Pregnant women can also sit backward on a chair when receiving back massages.

**7.** Hit the fleshy back muscles, using soft punches with the fists or edges of the hands.



**5.** Work the knots and tense muscles along the sides of the spine, pressing with the fingertips.



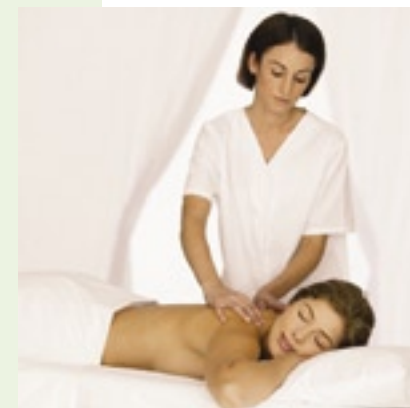
**6.** Pinch the skin, starting at the top and moving downward, using quick movements with both hands.



**8.** Place your cupped hands and massage along the rib cage and upper back. End by using the effleurage technique, as in step 1, massaging from the waist to the neck. Repeat three times using firm movements and three times using less pressure.

### ADVICE FOR THE MASSEUSE

- The body's temperature drops when receiving a massage, so when you are giving a massage, cover the parts of body you are not working on with towels. After a session, the person receiving the massage should rest. Cover her or him with a soft, light blanket.
- A good masseuse should use his or her intuition. While using different techniques, you can improvise according to what the person receiving the massage may need.
- To give a sense of comfort and relaxation, you should always keep one of your hands on the body of the person receiving the massage. This sends a sensation of continual movement. It's also important to use different levels of pressure and rhythm, to send waves of relaxation throughout the entire body.



### WARNING

- It's best to avoid massages when suffering from skin inflammations, tumors, infections, heart trouble, flebitis, clogged arteries, or skin lesions.

## RELAXING SELF-MASSAGES

The following do-it-yourself massages are a perfect way to relax when you need quick relief for tense muscles.

### IMPORTANT

Before beginning these massages it's good to relax your arms, hands and wrists.

It's important to relieve tension in these areas, to give you greater flexibility when applying necessary pressure in the following exercises.



**2.** Press the base of your skull with your thumbs. Next, release the pressure and with your fingers massage the scalp with circular motions.

**3.** Place your hands on the sides of the head. Inhale and bring the head downward. You should feel the muscles in the neck stretch.



**1.** Place your hands on your shoulders, with your fingers pointed toward your back, and apply pressure to the area. Bend your head down and then exhale. While you release the air, slowly bring the head backward. Repeat three times.

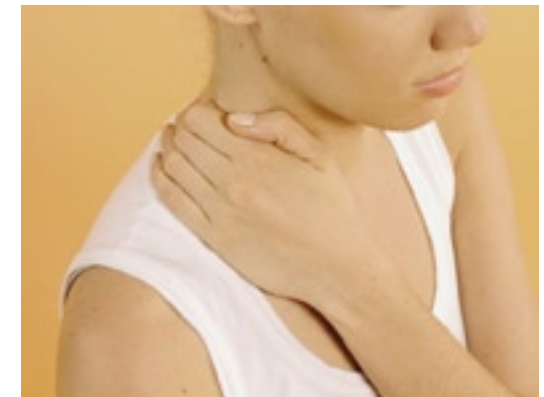
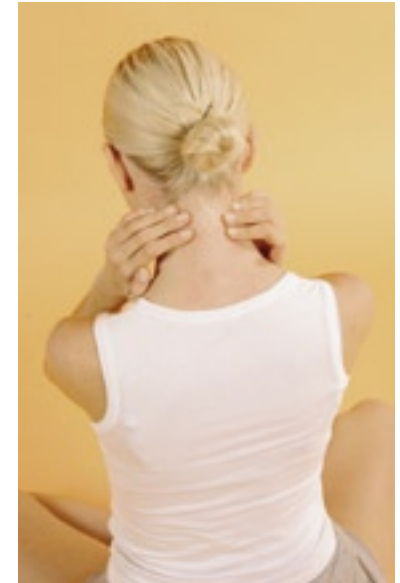


**4.** Place your right hand over your left shoulder. Slightly press on the point where the neck ends; release and press again. Repeat this movement several times on each side.

### HOW LONG

- With self-massages, you should work on each part of the body between three and five minutes.
- Once you've finished giving yourself a massage, it's good to relax your hands and arms, which tend to tense up while doing the exercises.

**5.** Place your fingers at the base of the neck. Apply circular pressure, from the base of the neck up to the skull. Next, continue the same motion downward.



**6.** Place your left hand over your right shoulder. Press with all of your fingertips, except for the thumb, and make tiny circular movements. Continue on the other side.

### FAST RELAXATION

To help you feel better instantly, you can give yourself the following self-massages anywhere, anytime.

#### ■ In the chest

To eliminate tension and worries.



**1.** Place your hands under your arms, (keeping them on their corresponding side of the body) with the thumbs in your armpit and your fingers extended on your chest. Continue by massaging your chest muscles with your fingertips, using firm pressure.



**2.** Close your hands bit by bit, until you end by gently massaging the chest with your knuckles.



**3.** Place your right hand under your left arm, and with the fingertips under the armpits and your thumb placed outside, gently massage the area. Repeat on the other side.

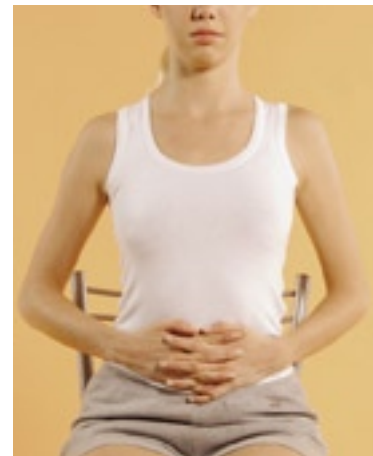
#### ■ In the abdomen

To relieve tension and anxiety stored in the abdomen.



**1.** Sit on a chair with your back straight. Place your hands on the abdomen, with your palms extended and fingers forward, spread apart. Massage by marking small clock-wise circles. Next, close your hands and put your fingers under your ribcage, pressing gently upward until your fingers fill the area.

**2.** Place your hands on each side of your hips, with the thumbs pointing forward and placed only an inch or two away from your bellybutton. Press, using clock-wise circular movements.



**3.** Hold your hands together over the stomach. Start by rubbing with gentle motions, moving from the top downward, until you feel heat. Finally, keep your hands on your stomach for a few minutes, breathing slowly.

## SPECIAL SELF-MASSAGES

These massages are great when you are nervous and need to quickly calm down. In less than an hour you will be relaxed.



### ■ Facial massage

With your fingertips gently press around your eyebrows, moving from the center of your forehead to your temples and around your ears, until you reach below your earlobes where your neck begins.

### PRIVATE TIME

If you have an important meeting or interview which will make you nervous, try and give yourself some private time for these relaxing exercises before leaving home. The best thing you can do is take a hot bath (with relaxing oils; see *Essential oils from A to Z* box, on page 43) and then continue with these self-massages before getting dressed. Focussing on your breathing is also very important.



### ■ Back massage

Sit on a chair and place your hands on your back, with your thumb pointed toward your waist and fingers backward. Move up and down, pressing the muscles around the spine with your fingertips. Next, with your hands closed, hit your lower back with your fists. Rub your buttocks using quick movements.

## BEFORE A JOB INTERVIEW

Without having to change your clothes and in any room where you are alone and calm, you can do these exercises to put yourself in harmony.

- Standing on your feet, with your legs apart and your hands on your hips at the level of your kidneys, lower your head to your knees and then lift it up. Repeat this exercise several times.
- Massage each one of your fingers and toes for a few minutes, taking deep

breaths to release anxiety.

- Sit up straight, take a deep breath and keep the air inside your lungs, without exhaling for ten seconds. Then gently release the air. Repeat 10 times.
- Standing up, with your arms relaxed against your sides, your back straight and your feet together, take a deep breath and lift up one of your arms straight. Repeat 10 times with each arm.

### ■ Hand massage

Massage the palm of your hand with your thumb in circular movements.



### ■ Leg and foot massage

Pinch the calves, moving from your ankle all the way up to your knees, to stimulate blood flow and energy. Rotate your ankles, one foot a time. Finally, massage the center of each foot with your thumbs.

# Breathing for the soul

*Qi gong*, which means “the art of managing the breath”, is an ancient discipline to control breathing through coordinating different patterns of breathing with different physical motions of the body. The technique enhances the body’s balance and stamina as reduces stress.

✚ This exercise calms the mind and moves energy in the lower part of the body to the center of the *Hara* or belly. You need to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth, concentrating the air in the lower part of the abdomen. The basic pose in *qi gong* is done standing up, with the feet slightly apart and firmly on the ground and the knees slightly bent. This sequence of movements should be repeated three times.

**1.** Form a large circle with your arms, hands together at the height of your bellybutton, with the palm of your hands facing your stomach.

**2.** Inhale; while the air enters the lungs, bring your hands upward with the palms facing the ceiling, at the height of the chest cavity.

**3.** Turn your palms toward the floor and exhale, bringing your hands down and extending your arms forward (with your hands still touching) in a slow and controlled movement.

**4.** Inhale again and return your hands to the chest cavity.

**5.** Turn your hands forward; and while you inhale, extend your arms looking forward at the movement of your hands.

**6.** Return your hands to your chest cavity as you inhale; as you exhale, slowly push the palms of your hands, extending your arms.

**7.** Inhale and return your hands to your chest cavity. Turn the palms of your hands toward the ceiling and while you exhale, slowly push upward, concentrating on your connection with the Universe.

**8.** Take a deep breath through the nose and turn your palms toward the floor, bringing them to the center of your body and pushing down as you extend your arms to return to the chest cavity area.



# Stress relieving shiatsu

*Shiatsu* is a traditional Japanese technique involving finger pressure to put the *chi*, or life energy into harmony to increase your health and well-being. *Shiatsu* sessions are ideal to prevent the build up of stress in our daily lives.

✦ *Shi* means “fingers” and *atsu* means “pressure”. *Shiatsu* means finger pressure in Japanese. Using the rhythmic pressing of acupressure points for short periods, the *shiatsu* technique is a treatment working on the meridians of the body to put our *chi* or life energy in balance. Energy can be either yin or yang and there are organs, which are either yin or yang. The *chi* or vital energy should flow harmoniously through the organs but when the flow is unbalanced it produces illnesses. The philosophy underlying *shiatsu* considers that if we eat a healthy diet, breathe correctly and maintain a strong and flexible body the *chi* flows freely, bringing good health. *Shiatsu* is a deeply relaxing experience, balancing the life energy. These following exercises are thought to bring you toward, harmony, balance and wholeness.

**1.** With your fingers below and your thumb on top, massage the shoulders as if you were kneading. Next, place the hands on the neck, with your thumb on the outside and the rest of your fingers under the neck. Gently, bring the head backward, stretching the neck. Repeat several times until you notice that the muscles relax. Finally, bring the head up and press firmly on the neck muscles.



**2.** Turn the head to one side, supporting it with your hand; with the fingertips of your other hand, rub the muscle tissue at the base of the scalp. Next, press on each spot at the base of the skull, from the ear until the spinal cord. Repeat on the other side.



**3.** Rub the scalp with your fingertips and then stroke the hair.



**4.** Turn the head to one side and give it support with your hand at the base of the skull, with your other hand supporting the shoulder. Ask the person to inhale and as exhaling stretch out the neck, gently and slowly, pushing the shoulder in the direction of their toes, without moving your other hand. Repeat two times on each side.

## KEY POINT

Beside your sternum, high along the chest cavity, are the points where we store anxiety the most. Applying pressure to these points is a very good way to calm you down and to alleviate stress.

# Calming foot therapy

Reflexology is a natural healing art that helps the body's overall health and relieves aches and pains by applying pressure to the base of the foot, toes, edges of the heels, palms and upper part of the hands. The following massages will relax your body, mind and spirit.

✚ Reflexology is used to treat imbalances in the body by pressing on certain parts of the feet and hands. The art is based on the principle that reflexes on the hands and feet correspond to the body's organs and glands. Applying stimulation and pressure to the feet or hands, you are increasing circulation and promoting specific bodily and muscular functions.

Reflexology is not an exact science, but has been proven through practice to give positive results. You don't need to be a specialist to give these relaxing massages, you can practice them with someone else or on yourself. The following massages are a good way to fight stress and to make you feel better.

*1. It's important to start by massaging the entire foot: first, rotate the ankles from one side to the other; next, massage the toes, one at a time. Finally, massage the entire base of the foot by pressing with your thumbs. Massage using clock-wise movements, to activate the foot's senses and then to relax them.*



**2.** Apply pressure with your finger on the point of the lower part of the foot that corresponds to the spinal column. The finger pressing on the top effects on the shoulder blades and the one on the bottom, on the lower back.



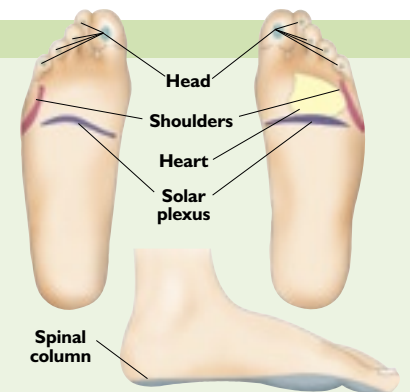
**3.** With your thumb press on the side of the foot, the part that corresponds to the upper back. With your other thumb, press on the outside of the ball of the foot, to work the tail bone.



**4.** Pressing on the point that corresponds to the chest cavity will give you a sense of calm and balance inside the body. This is a special point for relieving everyday stress.

## IMPORTANT

When you are dealing with everyday stress, a foot massage can provide soothing relief. However, it's important to pay attention to the points on the foot that correspond to the chest cavity, head and heart, or any part of your body which is achy and tense like your shoulders or back.



# Relaxing herbs

Medicinal plants are a soothing and effective way to relieve stress. Essential oils (listed in the box alphabetically) are made from highly concentrated essences of plants that have similar health benefits to herbal remedies but are used in aromatherapy.

## NOTE

You should always consult your physician before starting any herbal treatment.

✚ The following are effective stress fighting medicinal plants and herbal remedies. Some plants may be easier to find than others depending on where the plants are cultivated. You can find some as fresh plants or dried, and others in liquid form, tablets or powder.

## Mad-dog skullcap (*Scutellaria lateriflora*)

- **Parts used.** The leaves and flowers of the skullcap plant used for medical purposes are harvested in the summer. This herbal remedy can be taken as a tea



and in capsules or liquid form.

- Skullcap is native to North America. Because of its calming effects on the nervous and musculoskeletal system, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was considered to be a remedy for rabies, thus its name “mad dog weed.” It has a bitter taste and a slightly astringent characteristic.
- It helps the nervous system and aids in fighting anxiety and stress. Because it's also used to treat muscle spasms, it's useful for relieving muscle tension brought on by stress. It carries properties which can help you adapt to hostile environments (brought on by pollution, a difficult living situation or social pressures).

## AROMATHERAPY

*Aromatherapy is the use of essential oils extracted from plants, flowers, trees, and roots for physical and psychological treatment. Essential oils can be diluted and mixed with other vegetable-based oils because they tend to be costly and very concentrated.*

*Some uses for essential oils: rub into skin during massages, putting a few drops when taking a bath and/or drinking or ingesting (only under strict medical supervision). Using oils in massage therapy is the most common use because it awakens the smell, softens the skin and makes the massage feel even more relaxing (see Essential oils from A to Z box).*



## ESSENTIAL OILS FROM A TO Z



### BASIL

Stimulant and anti-depressive; tonic for the nervous system. It refreshes, purifies, and tones the skin. However, you should be cautious because it can irritate the skin. It can be mixed with bergamot, clary sage, geranium, lavender, lime, lemon balm, neroli and sandalwood.

**Safety.** You should always apply it diluted, if you have sensitive skin.

### BERGAMOT

Sedative and anti-depressant; tonic for the nerves. It helps to control oily skin, particularly when skin problems are related to stress. It can irritate sensitive skin, so it's best to use it in low concentrated levels and to avoid direct sun light after its application. It can be combined with geranium, juniper, jasmine, lavender, tangerine, neroli, patchouli, Roman camomile, marjoram, lemon and ylang ylang.

## WARNING

Essential oils are for external use **only**, they should **never** be ingested. Keep stored away from children and keep away from your eyes.

## Ginseng

(*Panax ginseng*)

- **Parts used.** The plant's root is extracted for capsules.
- Ginseng is cultivated in Northeastern China, Eastern Russia and North Korea; it is widely cultivated for holistic medicinal use.

- The West has long considered ginseng as a tonic to relieve stress through “adaptogen” activity.

Ginseng has a “universal defense action” which helps us adapt to hostile environments (pollution, difficult living situations and social pressures).

- **Warning.** Do not take ginseng continuously for more than 6 weeks. It can cause insomnia and high blood pressure. It's best to avoid coffee or caffeinated tea while using ginseng. This remedy is not recommended for pregnant women or for children under 12 years old.

## St. John's Wort

(*Hypericum perforatum*)

- **Parts used.** The leaf and flower of St. John's Wort are collected in

**FOR OCCASIONAL STRESS**  
Chew on 0.5-1 g of ginseng root daily, or use the root as a garnish in foods.



### SIBERIAN GINSENG

Siberian ginseng is native to Siberia, Russia and was used by Russian astronauts to maintain their stamina, immune system and to fight stress. Fresh or dried Siberian ginseng root is not available on the market, you can only buy it in capsule form, made from the base of the root. It also carries “adaptogen” properties, similar to ginseng.



the summer months, when they blossom. The leaves and flowers can be taken as a tea (fresh or dried).

- Also known as “St. John's plant”, it's native to Europe, but today it is grown throughout most of the world.
- It's mainly used to fight depression, especially for women at the stage of menopause.
- **Warning.** Sun exposure while taking St. John's Wort can cause skin problems because the skin becomes more sensitive to the sun. You shouldn't take this herbal supplement if you are taking birth control pills, blood clotting drugs, anti-viral drugs used in the treatment of HIV, or anti-depressives.

### TO FIGHT EVERYDAY STRESS

*Tea made with skullcap, St. John's Wort, lemon balm and vervain is a great calming remedy.*

*Mix 1 tablespoon (dried herb) or 2 tablespoons (fresh herb) with 2 cups of boiling water and filter.*

*You can drink up to 4 cups a day of the tea made with any of these herbs. With St. John's Wort, you must wait 2 to 3 weeks for results.*

### ESSENTIAL OILS FROM A TO Z



#### CLARY SAGE

Alleviates stress; it has properties that rejuvenate the skin. Its fragrance mixed with alcohol can produce nausea. Blend with bergamot, myrrh, geranium, jasmine, juniper, lavender and sandalwood.

**Safety.** It shouldn't be used during pregnancy. If used in concentrated amounts this essential oil can cause negative side effects or a narcotic effect.

#### EUCALYPTUS

Helps to relieve puffy skin. It should always be used diluted. If used too often, it can irritate your skin.

Combine with bergamot, juniper, lavender, lemon, lemon balm and rosemary.

**Safety.** It shouldn't be used if you have high blood pressure or if you have symptoms of epilepsy.



## Lavender

(*Lavandula officinalis*)

- **Parts used.** The flowers are most commonly used, the stems are also often used for decoration.
- Lavender grows all over Europe and in North Africa; also, it's cultivated in a number of countries such as France and the US. It has a strong, pleasant fragrance. The leaves can be added to salad, replacing mint.
- It is used to soothe and promote sleep, helping to relieve heart palpitations and insomnia. It can be had as an infusion and lavender oil can be rubbed on the skin or used in baths.



## Hops

(*Humulus lupulus*)

- **Parts used.** Hops are the corn-like, fruiting bodies (strobiles) of the plant and are typically harvested from cultivated female plants that contain gray seeds, which are covered with yellow glands. Hops are cultivated in the summer. The fruit can be used to make infusions,



### SEDATIVE INFUSION

Pour boiling water in a cup with a few spoonfuls of dried hops fruiting flowers. Let it steep for 10 minutes; filter and drink before going to bed.

liquid extract, syrups, or pills.

- A perennial vine that grows in humid conditions and needs plenty of sun. It grows in abundance in the northern Iberian Peninsula, but is widely cultivated throughout the world. It has a pleasant aroma and a slightly bitter and spicy taste.
- Hops have been found to have mild sedative properties; fight insomnia, heart palpitations and excessive nervousness.



### ESSENTIAL OILS FROM A TO Z



#### GERANIUM

Tones and relaxes the nervous system. It's beneficial for every skin type: it increases blood flow to the skin and normalizes oil production that maintains the skin's elasticity. One drop can be used on the affected area of the skin. When used in excess it can irritate sensitive skin. Mix with bergamot, clary sage, jasmine, juniper, lavender, tangerine, neroli, patchouli, Roman camomile, rose, rosemary, sandalwood and basil.

#### GINGER

Acts as a tonic for the nervous system; bath soothing and a stimulant. If you have sensitive skin, it's best to use ginger oil diluted. Blend with eucalyptus, myrrh, geranium, lemon, tangerine, patchouli, Roman camomile, rose, rosemary, sandalwood and vetiver.



### Camomile

(*Matricaria Chamomilla L.*)

- **Parts used.** The flower-heads or capitula are harvested in the spring. Camomile can be prepared as a tea, using 1 generous spoonful per cup of boiling water. It is also used as a decoration and as a dye.
- Although this plant is native to Europe, it is also grown in North America.
- It calms the nerves and fights muscle spasms; it produces a wonderful soothing effect and aids the digestive system, especially when under stress.



### Lemon balm

(*Melissa officinalis*)

- **Parts used.** The leaves are harvested in the summer before the flowers fully blossom and are used (fresh and dried) in a number of ways. An infusion of fresh lemon balm leaves is a great relaxing tonic. It also can be used as a furniture stain.

- Lemon balm has been used for centuries in Europe, the Far East and Northern Europe and is grown all over the world. It has a slight taste between bitter and sweet.
- It's used as a relaxing tonic to relieve anxiety, slight depression, irritability and digestive problems caused by stress.



### Passion flower

(*Passiflora coerulea*)

- **Parts used.** The flowers and leaves are used in infusions. The fruit is edible.
- Native to Central America where it's grown most commonly in gardens. A species with similar characteristics, the *Passiflora incarnata*, is grown in Europe.
- One of the best remedies against nervous attack, it doesn't have any side effects. Passion flower has sedative and soothing properties, but it is not depressive. It also makes you

### ESSENTIAL OILS FROM A TO Z



#### LAVENDER

Helps with mood swings, regulates the central nervous system and calms the spirit. When used on the skin, it stimulates cell growth and regulates excess oil, especially when blended with bergamot. Mix with bergamot, clary sage, geranium, jasmine, lemon, tangerine, neroli, patchouli, Roman camomile, rose and rosemary.

**Safety.** If you have low blood pressure, lavender can make you drowsy.

#### LEMON BALM

Rejuvenating and anti-depressive it is calming and relaxing. Mix with myrrh, geranium, ginger, jasmine, juniper, lavender, neroli, Roman camomile, rose, rosemary, basil and ylang ylang.

**Safety.** It should be avoided during pregnancy and can irritate sensitive skin.



#### INFUSION OR CALMING LIQUOR

Make an infusion adding 2 spoonfuls of dried passion flower to 2 cups of water. Allow to steep and strain. Drink 2 or 3 cups a day. Using the same proportions, allow the passion flower to soak in ethilic alcohol (30 degrees) for a week. Filter and drink 25 drops a day.



sleepy. Ideal for work related stress, mood swings and nervousness brought on by premenstrual syndrome and menopause.

- **Warning.** Do not use passion flower if you are pregnant or breast-feeding. Do not administer to children under 3 years old. For children under 12 years old, consult a medical specialist, because the dose should be proportioned to the weight of the child.

Eat passion fruit only when very ripe, because the fruit has toxic properties before ripening.



## Rosemary

(*Rosmarinus officinalis*)

- **Parts used.** The leaves and sometimes the flowers are used in an infusion (1 teaspoon of dried leaves a day) or in liquid form (1 to 2 teaspoons daily).
- Native to Europe, but widely used throughout the world.
- It has tonic properties and stimulates the nervous, circulatory and cardiovascular systems. It is an anti-spasm and coleretic. It acts as a stimulant, which is beneficial for worn out nerves.
- **Warning.** In some cases rosemary, as a side effect, can obstruct to the bile duct.



## ESSENTIAL OILS FROM A TO Z



### MYRRH

This oil has special soothing properties that stimulate meditation. It's very good for dry, tired or sun burnt skin, because of its tonic and rejuvenating effects; it also acts as an astringent for oily skin. Mix with bergamot, geranium, lavender, tangerine, neroli, patchouli, sandalwood, basil and vetiver.

### ROMAN CAMOMILE

It calms mood swings brought on by stress. It's especially good for hypersensitive and dry skin because it improves the skin's elasticity. Blend with bergamot, clary sage, geranium, jasmine, lavender, neroli, patchouli, rose, marjoram and ylang ylang.

**Safety.** This oil shouldn't be used during the first four months of pregnancy.



#### SLEEPY RECIPE

Prepare an infusion with 3 teaspoons of linden flower and 4 cups of boiling water. Set to steep and strain. Drink when you have symptoms of nervous tension.

### Linden

(*Tilia sp*)

- **Parts used.** The flowers, leaves and stems, which can be used as an infusion, as decoration, or to chew.
- They are also called lime blossoms, linden flowers and tilia. It is native to Europe, where it grows in warm climates with clay-like soil. It is also found in Asia and in North and South America. Although it prefers to grow in a tropical climate, it does grow in some cold areas in Russia. There are different species: *Tilia cordata*, *Tilia platyphyllos*, *Tilia vulgaris*, *Tilia tomentosa* and *Tilia americana*, sharing similar properties.
- Linden is a relaxing remedy for nervous tension and to sooth the heart and digestive system affected by stress. It has sedative and anti-spasm properties. It doesn't have any side effects.

### Valerian

(*Valeriana officinalis L.*)

- **Parts used.** The roots, which are harvested during the dry months of spring and autumn. It is used to make infusions, tinctures, or capsules.
- It grows in forests, along streams and in humid soil. In ancient times it



was used as an anticonvulsant (to treat epileptic convulsions).

- It acts as a sedative and anti-spasm remedy, soothing the nerves and helping to normalize the heart's rhythm. It also helps bring on sleep.
- **Warning.** It shouldn't be used during pregnancy. If used in excessive amounts it can produce vomiting.

#### ANTI-STRESS INFUSION

In boiling water place 3 teaspoons of valerian root, allow to steep over night and strain. Drink a cup when you feel stressed out. You can add 1 teaspoon of peppermint to give a pleasant aroma and taste to valerian tea.



#### ESSENTIAL OILS FROM A TO Z



#### SANDALWOOD

Calms anxiety; softens dry skin. Mix with bergamot, myrrh, geranium, jasmine, lavender, lemon, neroli, rose, basil, vetiver and ylang ylang.

#### VETIVER

It fortifies the central nervous system, relieves stress as well as physical and mental exhaustion. It helps oily skin. Combine with myrrh, geranium, jasmine, lavender, patchouli, rose, sandalwood and ylang ylang.

#### YLANG YLANG

Tonic and sedative for the nervous system; regulates the skin's oil production and is beneficial for oily to dry skin. Its properties become even stronger when blended with other essences. It's not recommended if your skin is irritated or puffy. Blend with bergamot, jasmine, lavender, lemon, lemon balm, neroli, patchouli, rose and sandalwood.

**Safety.** Prolonged use can cause negative effects like headaches.

# Stress fighting foods

Stress and food are related: a nutritional deficit can cause the body stress. However, eating a balanced diet helps to fight illnesses and face everyday stress and pressures.



✚ A lack of iron in the body can cause a decreased flow of oxygen to the muscle tissue and the brain, which causes you to get tired, irritable and unable to concentrate. A diet that includes poly-unsaturated fats derived from vegetables (oils and seeds) can stimulate the immune system, while a diet rich in saturated fat (derived from animal fat) can make us more susceptible to illnesses. Studies have shown that healthy people eat a diet with a large amount of **grains** and **vegetables** (preferably organically grown), that are naturally **high in fiber** and contain natural mono-unsaturated and poly-unsaturated fats.

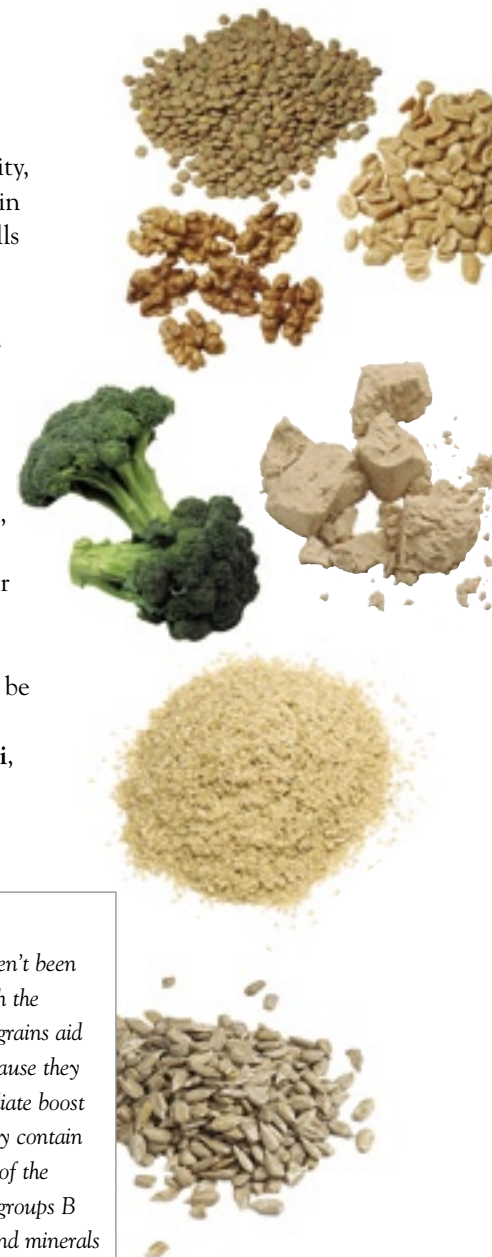
## VITAMINS AND MINERALS

Symptoms of a diet lacking vitamins and minerals include depression, anxiety, stomach problems and insomnia, which also make up the symptoms of excessive stress. When we are stressed out it's best to eat a nutrient rich diet, to maintain a balanced and healthy physical and mental state. The most important stress fighting nutrients are:

## The vitamin B group

This vitamin protects the nervous system and soothes the body and mind, combating anxiety, irritability, tension and insomnia. This vitamin group is needed for your body's cells to convert carbohydrates and fats into energy.

**B<sub>5</sub>** is essential for fighting chronic stress and **vitamin B<sub>6</sub>** aids in the function of a healthy nervous system (which, when unbalanced, can produce nervousness, depression, insomnia, mental confusion and irritability). Combined with **B<sub>12</sub>**, it induces our brain's serotonin secretion, which helps us to calm our nerves and anxiety. The vitamin B group can be found in foods like, **yeast, wheat germ, dried fruits, beans, broccoli, sunflower seeds, lentils, peanuts, nuts** and many other foods.



## WHOLE GRAINS

*Whole grains are cereals that haven't been processed, and are used with the grain's shell. All whole grains aid in fighting stress because they give you an immediate boost of energy and they contain high levels of the vitamin groups B and E and minerals such as calcium, iron and zinc.*



**WARNING**  
You should always consult your doctor before changing your diet.



### CELERY

Celery has a high level of potassium, and the vitamins C, B<sub>1</sub> and E, which are all important nutrients in fighting stress. Celery also carries fitonutrients, called fitalidos, that have a soothing effect on the central nervous system.

**Warning.** After eating large amounts of celery, it's best to avoid prolonged sun exposure or tanning beds because this vegetable can make your skin more sensitive to the sun.



**CELERY JUICE**  
(To calm exhausted nerves). In a blender, blend an entire celery plant (roots, stalks and leaves) with a good amount of water, and drink three glasses per day



### Vitamin C

The level of vitamin C decreases in your body when it is under a lot of stress; it's important when you are stressed out to eat vitamin C rich foods. Vitamin C strengthens our immune system, which our body's hormones attack when under stress. This vitamin can be found in many fruits and vegetables, particularly in **citrus fruits, strawberries, kiwis, guavas, currants, oranges, tomatoes and red pepper.**



### CITRUS FRUITS

Grapefruit, kiwis, oranges, tomatoes and lemons are a major source of vitamin C, which is why they are such important stress-fighting foods.

### ALKALINE COCKTAIL

This is a perfect drink to sooth your nerves. For 1 cup, peel 1 orange and 1 grapefruit, without peeling the white parts of the skin. Cut into slices and blend them with the juice from a lemon.

### OATMEAL

Oatmeal (*avena sativa*) is one of the best cereals to lower stress. This cereal is rich in vitamin E, zinc and carbon hydronate.



### Recipes

- If you are sleeping poorly or for exhausted nerves, it's recommended consuming three portions per day, either in porridge or drinking a tincture with concentrated oats with water.
- For nervous exhaustion and stress when you are elderly. Eat 1 spoonful daily (as porridge for example). Another option: 1/2 spoonful of oat tincture, in a soup or stew, two times daily.

### Vitamin E

Recent research that has shown people who intake between 100 I.U. and 400 I.U. of vitamin E are less likely to develop heart disease and their immune systems are stronger. Vitamin E is mostly found in raw vegetable oils, dried fruits, avocado and wheat germ.



### AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY, WATER



Drinking at least 6 to 8 glasses of water a day helps you to lose weight, detoxifies the body and helps you to quit smoking or drink alcohol. Not drinking enough water can cause you lethargy, loss of concentration, and nervousness. Water is a detoxifying and energizing element. Freshly squeezed juice is another beverage which helps you feel better.



### Calcium

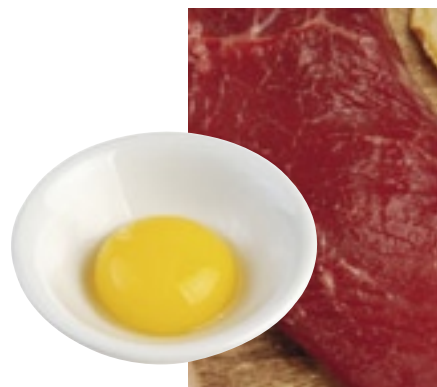
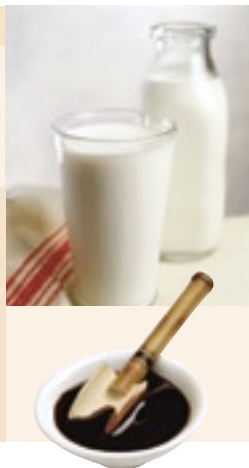
Calcium helps our nerves send messages to our brain, and along with magnesium it helps to regulate our nerves and muscles stamina, it prevents aging, promotes a healthy mental state, helps us sleep and regulate our heart rates. It is mostly found in **milk, cheeses, yogurts, sardines and sesame seeds.**

#### SKIM MILK

Skim milk has a high level of calcium, which your body needs. It helps us grow and maintains the nervous system in good health. It helps our bodies produce enzymes helping the nervous system's functions.

#### RECIPE

**To sleep soundly, nothing is better than grandma's remedy to make you sleepy: warm milk (the flavor and temperature brings us back to our childhood), and add a spoonful of molasses (rich in potassium, calcium, iron, copper, phosphorus, magnesium, and the vitamins B and C). Relaxing and calming.**



### Chrome

A deficiency of chrome alters the production of insulin and metabolism of carbohydrates, aminoacids and fats. Stress increases the loss of chrome in our urine. Chrome rich foods include **egg yolks, molasses, brewers yeast, red meat, wheat germ and wholewheat flour and grains.**

### BREWERS YEAST

Brewers yeast is a food rich in protein, chrome and vitamins from the B group. If you are stressed out, eat 3 times a day, starting with a teaspoon at breakfast for the first month and then adding a spoonful at each meal during the next 3 months (at breakfast, lunch and dinner). It's ideal to dilute 1 soup spoonful of brewer's yeast in 1 glass of orange juice (which is rich in vitamin C), the acid in the juice helps our body absorb proteins better, a combination for a perfect stress-relieving drink.



### Iron

Helps the respiratory system. Iron joins with proteins to produce hemoglobin (red pigment in our blood), which sends oxygen to our muscle tissue. The intake of iron is fundamental when our bodies are under stress because it helps the flow of oxygen in our bodies. It is necessary for group B vitamins to act and stimulates our immune systems and stamina. **Sardines, wheat germ, brewers yeast, sea algae, liver, eggs and spinach** are all iron rich foods.



#### IRON RICH SPINACH SALAD

*For a tasty stress fighting salad, mix washed spinach leaves and grated Parmesan cheese. Dress with salt and olive oil.*

### NUTS AND ALMONDS

Walnuts are a great source of magnesium, they give you energy, fight stress and reduce premenstrual symptoms like migraines, irritability and swelling. Eat 2 walnuts a day to ensure sufficient intake of vitamin E, a fundamental emotion balancing nutrient.



### Magnesium

Natural stress reducing food that aids to balance the production of neurons and acts on the transmission of nerves which maintain a healthy nervous system. It helps you to sleep soundly and to relax. It's especially helpful in reducing exhaustion caused by chronic stress and daily anxiety. If your body lacks magnesium, you tend to stay tense when under pressure, more likely to be irritable, anxious, depressed and suffer from cardiovascular problems, insomnia and muscle spasms. Magnesium is found in green leafy vegetables, bananas, wheat germ, fish, sea algae and dried fruits.



### IS CHOCOLATE A GOOD THING?

Chocolate has been termed as a high-fat food and an unhealthy comfort food. But contrary to belief, eating an occasional, moderate amount of chocolate is good for the health, especially against stress. When eaten in moderation, it increases our level of serotonin and puts us in a better mood. This is why when women are suffering from premenstrual tension they crave chocolate. It's best to eat dark chocolates, pure cocoa, or chocolate with almonds added. Try to avoid cream filled chocolates or truffles.



### Potassium

Potassium is an important nutrient against chronic stress and to help our nervous system, muscles and heart function properly. If you are not getting enough potassium you may suffer from insomnia, nervousness and depression. Artichokes, celery, cauliflower, spinach, lettuce, beans, dried fruits, bananas and dates are potassium rich foods.



### LETTUCE

The core, zest and stalk are all gentle sedatives. Lettuce also contains calcium and potassium, both stress fighting nutrients. It's good to eat when you are overstimulated or suffering from insomnia. Avoid when suffering from bile duct problems.



### SOOTHING JUICE

Blend in a blender 1/2 a lettuce plant, 1 celery stalk and 1 branch of parsley. Drink right away.

### BANANAS

All fruit have nutrients which help us fight stress, but one of the best anti-stress fruits is the banana. It's a wonderful source of energy, rich in potassium and magnesium, and helps us to clear our minds.

### ANTI-STRESS MOUSSE

Serves 4. In a blender, add 2 peeled bananas, a small amount of grated ginger and 4 tablespoons of skim milk and blend well.

Beat 2 egg whites until they form a meringue and add them to the banana mixture. Put the mousse in serving cups and refrigerate. Before serving decorate with whipping cream or light cream cheese blended with confectionery sugar. Garnish with banana slices.



## Zinc

A lack of zinc can cause irritability, depression, impotence and a low immune system. A high intake of zinc helps you to fight off illnesses. When you are stressed out, you use more zinc and quickly run out of this mineral. Fresh oysters, sesame seeds, ginger root, whole flour, Pará nuts and red meat are all zinc rich foods.



### WHAT YOU SHOULD AVOID

- Fast food.
- Artificially sweetened soft drinks.
- Rich, sweet foods.
- Ice cream.
- Pastries and cookies.
- Dishes with a lot of spices.
- Alcohol in excess during meals.

### WHAT YOU SHOULD DO

- Eat fresh, high quality foods.
- Cook at home to entertain friends.
- Put on soft music and create a relaxing atmosphere during meals.

### TURKEY, A HEALTHY MEAT

*It's one of the most balanced meats, low in fat. It's good to eat turkey when you are stressed out, because it doesn't have any side effect and is rich in nutrients.*



### VEGETABLES AND FRUITS

Purify the body (ideal for detoxifying the body). For a 1 cup of juice, use 2 or 3 carrots, 1/2 cucumber, 1/2 beet with the leaves. Peel the carrots and cut them into thin slices, cut the cucumber into 4 slices, and then chop. Chop the beet into small dices. Blend together in a juicer.



### WHAT TO BUY AND HOW MUCH?

When you go grocery shopping during the week, it's best to make a list of what you will eat everyday and to list the ingredients you will need for a balanced diet. For a healthy balanced body, mind and spirit it's recommended that you eat daily:



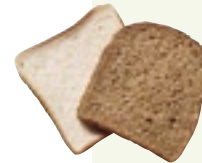
- **5 servings of fruit and vegetables per day.** They have a high level of vitamins and minerals that help you to fight stress.



- **3 servings of dairy products (for example: a glass of milk, piece of cheese or yogurt) per day.** Dairy have calming properties, and nutrients and are important to develop a healthy body, especially the bones.



- **3 servings of grains or cereals (rice, grains, whole flour in breads, etcetera) per day for fiber.** Foods high in fiber calm and bring peace.



- **1 to 2 servings of lean meat.** It's important to avoid fats that can cause weight gain and cardiovascular diseases. It's best to eat fish 3 times a week, poultry twice and red meat once a week.



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