## Some Tips to Help You Relax & Reduce Stress

Do you often find yourself dealing with situations that cause your breathing and heart rate to speed up, your adrenaline to pump and your blood pressure to rise? If you answered yes, chances are, you're pretty stressed out.

While the link between stress and heart disease isn't totally clear, you could be causing damage to your artery walls, not to mention a host of other ailments, including muscle aches, headaches, sleeplessness, forgetfulness and feelings of depression (just to name a few). If you're constantly tense, short tempered, angry or easily irritated, you may want to try some relaxation techniques to help you find a sense of calm and contentment in your day. Here are a few to try to get started on the path to better health and harmony.

- 1. **Breathe Deeply** Take a few moments every day to concentrate on deep breathing. Sit in a comfortable position or lie down. Close your eyes and inhale deeply, and follow with a long, slow exhale. Keep your mind focused solely on your breathing. Repeat this process for 10 complete breaths.
- 2. **Visualize** Visualization is a powerful and effective technique. When you feel stressed, visualize your favorite place or thing that takes your mind away from the cause of your stress. By doing this, you're creating your own "dreamscape" and creating a more relaxed environment for yourself.
- 3. Massage or Self-Massage Massage is important to relieve stress and tension in your muscles. Regular massage therapy is highly beneficial for your whole body and also evokes feelings of deep relaxation. Plus, it has also been found to soothe anxiety and depression by reducing levels of cortisol and boosting the neurotransmitters serotonin and dopamine. Massage has also been found to improve sleep, boost immunity and ease symptoms of PMS. If you don't have time to visit a pro, give yourself a quick massage by placing both hands on your shoulders and neck and squeezing with your fingers and palms for a few minutes.
- 4. **Meditate** You can engage in traditional meditation, or choose another activity walking, swimming, knitting that keeps your attention in the present moment. The idea is to keep your mind off of whatever is stressing you and on the repetition of the activity. Try this for as little as 10 minutes per day and watch your stress levels reduce.

## **Sources:**

Huffington Post: Massage Benefits: 9 Healthy Reasons to Make an Appointment Today WebMD.com: 10 Relaxation Techniques to Reduce Stress

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