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Can't Meditate? Try These 9 Ways to Break Free from Stress

Don't get me wrong; practicing meditation is an excellent approach to optimizing your health and overall well-being (I aim to practice it daily). Meditation is great for relieving and dealing with stress, and all the issues that come along with it. But it's not the only way to get there. The whole purpose of meditating is to calm the mind, emotions and relax our physical body. If you are having a hard time maintaining a regular meditation practice or are not sure how to start, then this article will offer you 9 other ways that you can help you break free from stress!

1. Journaling

Spending some time every day writing out your thoughts can help to relieve stress. There are several different ways that journaling can be done. You can use journaling to list the things you're grateful for, this is known as gratitude journaling. You can use it as a "brain dump" to get all your thoughts and ideas out of your head to soothe your mind. You can use "ever since" journaling to describe your life after you reach your goals. Remember, while journaling it is important to NOT censor yourself. Let the words flow!

2. Spend time in nature

You don't have to head away for vacation to relax in nature. While a calm beautiful beach or cabin in the woods may be amazing, you don't have to go that far. Even spending time on the grass at your local park or playground or walking on a wooded trail in your neighborhood can do the trick.

3. Make time for people and pets you love

It's so important to spend time with family, friends, and pets whom you love. New research is coming out about the health issues related to loneliness. Reach out and plan to hang out with your besties, or even offer to take your neighbour's dog for a walk in the park.

4. Sleep

A common cause of increased stress hormones is lack of sleep. Too little sleep and too much stress go hand-in-hand. So, getting enough good quality sleep is important to help you break free from stress without having to meditate. It is important to try and establish a regular bedtime and waking time, to sleep in a completely dark room, and set the temperature to be on the cool side.

5. Breathing

There are many different types of breathing exercises that can help with stress but one of my favorite ones to use is called a relaxing breath. I like it because it is simple to do and doesn't take long. To begin, inhale slowly through your nose for a count of 4 seconds, hold your breath for a count of 7 seconds, and exhale through the mouth for a count of 8 seconds. Repeat this cycle two times on rising in the morning and then again before bed. Many of my patients have found this so easy to do that they were able to make it a daily practice!



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6. **Colouring**

Adult colouring books are all the rage! Something that can take you hours, something simple, like kids colouring pages work too. The idea is the same. Repeated movements and focusing on the art you're creating can help to clear your mind, and practicing being present in the moment.

7. **Knitting or crocheting (or other crafts)**

Yarn activities are a great way to de-stress; this is a skill that comes in all levels from beginner to advanced. You can choose a quick little rectangular scarf to make, or a detailed sweater. You can choose the pattern, size, and yarn. Once you get into the flow of these skills, they're great to do when you're feeling stressed. Not only can they relax your mind to focus on your work, but you can end up warming yourself or others with the products you create. Some people gather in groups to do their knitting, this adds another level of stress support!!

8. **Gentle exercise**

Gently moving your body is another great way to de-stress. Activities that are slower and less intensive are ideal. Things like walking, yoga, stretching, or tai chi can all be great ways to relax your mind and improve your strength and balance at the same time.

9. **Pamper yourself**

Maybe you love getting massages, or a long bath? Perhaps you can add your favourite relaxing music and calming essential oils to the mix for a pampering evening? Spending some time to pamper yourself regularly is great for your mind, body, and spirit. A different way to think about pampering yourself is to set boundaries and practice saying no to avoid overextending yourself.

Many of my patients find booking in to see me for an acupuncture session as part of their "me" time has been very helpful during stressful times.

Stress reduction is the goal. How you do it, be it meditation or otherwise, is not that important. What's important is that you find what works for you and try to practice it daily. I invite you to choose one of the nine suggestions that interests you and begin to practice it. These are just a few ideas to help you break free from stress but if you are feeling like stress might be too much, there are other ways Naturopathic Medicine can help. I have worked with many patients in my ten years of practice to help them manage stress. If you would like to learn more about how I can help you break free from stress, I offer a complimentary 15 minute "meet and greet" visit. Or, if you are ready to book an acupuncture appointment or a full initial intake please call the clinic at **905-940-2727**.



For the past decade, Dr. Nesbitt has been helping women and children with their health concerns. Practicing as a licensed Naturopathic Doctor and Certified Functional Medicine Practitioner, Dr. Jessica uses an integrative approach with a focus in providing personalized care. She aims to find the root cause for fatigue, hormonal imbalances, thyroid/adrenal disorders, stress, weight concerns or digestive issues. She also has a passion for treating children, guiding women through a preconception detox, and supporting a healthy pregnancy. Visit JessicaND.com to learn more!