

## Wellness: Healthy Lifestyle Changes for the Mind, Body & Spirit Avoid chronic stress by maintaining a workout routine throughout the holidays.

Stress. We all have it, but some of us know how to manage it better than others. Stress plays havoc with our health, productivity, pocketbooks and lives, especially during the holidays. No matter what, there is no getting around it.

The causes of stress are vast and highly individual. Researchers say it is in part caused by your perception of an event that makes you feel threatened or upsets your balance in some way.



Chronic stress can lead to serious health problems and issues, including the inability to concentrate, anxious worrying, memory problems, irritability, short temper, sense of loneliness, depression, aches/pain, chest pain, nausea, overeating and under-eating, sleeping too much or too little, increase heart attack or stroke and much more.

Managing stress means changing the situation when you can, changing your reaction when you can't, taking care of yourself and making time for rest and relaxation.

You can't completely eliminate stress from your life, but you can control how much it affects you by adding a variety of relaxation techniques to your life. Relaxation techniques involve refocusing your attention to something calming and increasing awareness of your body. Some examples are yoga, meditation, tai chi, deep breathing, massage therapy and workout routines. It doesn't matter what technique you choose. What matters is that you practice it regularly.

**Yoga:** A series of moving and stationary poses combined with deep breathing. Choose classes that focus on slow, steady movement and gentle stretching.

**Tai chi:** The ancient art of tai chi is often described as "meditation in motion" because it promotes serenity through gentle movements — connecting the mind and body. Tai chi is a self-paced, non-competitive series of gentle physical exercise and stretching in a slow, flowing movement. Tai chi is a low-impact option for people of all ages and levels of fitness.

**Massage:** The Chinese have been using massage to treat all kinds of medical conditions for centuries. It provides a deep relaxation, calming the nervous system and reducing tension and anxiety.

**Meditation:** Recognized as a largely spiritual practice, meditation is a mental discipline where you go beyond the "thinking" mind into a deeper state of relaxation and awareness. Meditation has many health benefits, including a deeper level of relaxation, lower blood pressure, reduced anxiety attacks, decreased muscle tension and headaches.

**Deep Breathing:** The act of breathing deep into your lungs by flexing your diaphragm rather than breathing shallowly by flexing your rib cage. It is considered a healthier and fuller way to ingest oxygen.

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