

# WOMAN'S DAY

September 1, 2008

Circulation: 3,930,566

## one minute to calm

20 ways to beat stress  
in 60 seconds or less

by Denise Schipani

**S**URE, AN HOUR-LONG massage or a week-long vacation would do wonders to ease your stress. But what can you do to chill out *right now*? Try one of our mini-stress busters. They work wonders in a minute or less.

**COUNT IT DOWN** Starting at 60, count backward, breathing in and out with each number, says Julieta Macias, PhD, a life coach in Rockville, Maryland. With your mind focused on the numbers and your breathing, it's tougher to dwell on what's got you stressed.

**USE YOUR EYES** Put the tips of your ring finger and thumb together, and place the index and middle fingers of each hand on your forehead, about an inch above your eyes. While leaving your fingers in place, think about a stressful event you can't seem to banish, and move your eyes in a circle, looking up, right, down and left. Then switch directions. It may feel a little silly, but "this technique can help lower your blood pressure," says Marie Matteson, LMP, a massage therapist in Bellingham, Washington.

**POP A PRUNE** Snack on a couple of these, say the Nutrition Twins, sisters Tammy Lakatos Shames, RD, and Lyssie Lakatos, RD. The healthy carbohydrates deliver a burst of energy and release feel-good serotonin. Prunes are also high in magnesium, which relaxes tension.

**RATE YOUR STRESS** Suzanne Zoglio, psychologist and author of *Recharge in Minutes*, suggests giving your stress level a numerical score, from 1 (they're out of Chunky Monkey ice cream at the store) to 10 (a death in the family). "Rating your current stressful situation, especially compared with others you've survived, reduces it by providing perspective."

**GRAB A TOY** Keep inexpensive little toys at your desk—like a yo-yo or a Rubik's Cube. When you're stuck in a phone conversation that won't end, put the caller on speakerphone and play for a minute to get your mind off the anxiety.

**GET A HUG** When Cindy Chrysler of Millington, Michigan, feels overwhelmed, she'll shout to her family, "Healthy hugs!" "My children come running from wherever they are and we all



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hug each other, then we go back to what we were doing,” she says.

**HIT THE (INVISIBLE) TRAMPOLINE** Kate Hanley, author of *The Anywhere, Anytime Chill Guide*, suggests a minute of bouncing like a kid on a trampoline: Stand with knees slightly bent, and lightly jump up and down on the floor. You don't have to go high, and you should keep your knees soft and let your arms move freely to increase momentum, as though you were actually bouncing. Gradually come to a stop.

**STAY IN THE MOMENT** Stuck in traffic? Instead of worrying about how late you are or getting angry,

admire something around you—wildflowers on the side of the highway, the lyrics to a favorite song on the radio—says Masha Malka, author of *The One Minute Coach: Change Your Life One Minute at a Time*. “If I get stressed about slow traffic, does that make it faster? No. So why not enjoy the time?” she says.

**DROP AND GIVE 20** Push-ups, that is. Old-school calisthenics like push-ups “get the heart pumping and the blood flowing, which has a tremendous impact on brain receptors that trigger stress signals,” says Tom Kersting, PhD, a psychotherapist in Ridgewood, New Jersey.

**GO ON A (VIRTUAL) VACATION**

Charlotte Libov, coauthor of *A Woman's Guide to Heart Attack Recovery*, suggests packing your mental bags for a one-minute trip back to your last holiday. Close your eyes. Feel the breeze on the beach, smell the food in the restaurant, visualize the sun on the lake. *Voilà*, instant holiday.

**TAKE A TASTE (OF WINE)** Lots of us find a glass of wine relaxing. But before you gulp, take a moment to deliberately taste your favorite vintage, says Kathleen Lisson, a wine educator and wine-and-food pairing teacher in Albany, New York. Actively concentrating on tasting anything—wine, a tart, *(Please turn to 22)*

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LDX2261 05/08

## live well

### ONE MINUTE TO CALM

**CONTINUED** Crunchy apple, a flavorful cheese—brings pleasure and distracts you from worries.

**LOL** Make yourself laugh—the harder the better. Chase your kids with intent to tickle. Watch your cat during one of her inexplicable feline manic episodes. Put marshmallow Peeps on a paper towel in the microwave, and zap for a few seconds to watch them puff up.

**HAVE A BALL** Or just lie on one.

Personal trainer and owner of FitnessForBusyMoms.com Stephen Cooper recommends lying on your back on a large stability ball. “The stretch releases tension in the lower back, shoulders and chest.” Plus, looking at your world upside down shifts your perspective. Don’t have a stability ball? Get a similar effect by hanging your upper body off the edge of your bed.

**BELLY-BREATHE** Focusing on your body’s center—your belly—shifts attention from irritating thoughts. Lisa Sarasohn, a Kripalu yoga instructor in Asheville, North Carolina, suggests this easy move (note: pregnant women should not try it). Sit, stand or lie on your back with a pillow under your knees. Keeping your mouth closed, inhale slowly through your nose, expanding your belly. Now, push your belly out even farther to inhale more. Open your mouth and exhale slowly, allowing your belly to sink back toward your spine. Now pull your belly in even farther to exhale more. Repeat.

**WRITE IT DOWN** Get a pen and paper, or open a blank document on your computer, and just write. Don’t self-censor; just get whatever’s bugging you out there, stream of consciousness-style, for a minute. Swear words optional.

**CHEW GUM** In a 2006 study, people who chewed gum four days a week had reduced stress levels. Pop a (sugarless) piece in your mouth and get that jaw working.



### INDULGE IN DARK CHOCOLATE

Many of us reach for a candy bar when we’re stressed. The best choice? Dark chocolate, says Jacob Teitelbaum, MD, author of *From Fatigued to Fantastic!* “It contains PEA, a natural calming molecule, and theobromine, a mild caffeine-like stimulant.”

**DO THE HULA (HOOP)** Some gyms now offer a workout with a hula-hoop. Try something like it at home by breaking out a hoop and swiveling those hips for a minute. A little sweat, a lot of concentration as you try to keep it spinning, and who can remember that the kids have outgrown their sneakers again?

**TAKE AN ART BREAK** “When I need relief from stress, I ‘rest’ my eyes on a beautiful piece of art and let my mind and body relax,” says Beverly Solomon of Lampasas, Texas. Don’t have walls hanging with masterpieces or time to hit the museum? Keep a postcard of a favorite painting or an image from an art book on hand.

**DO A “FLASHDANCE”** Remember Jennifer Beals in the ‘80s movie? Put on music and work up a burst of intense physical exertion. LiRon Anderson-Bell, who runs a public relations firm in Philadelphia, found out in college that a no-holds-barred, pulse-racing dance calmed her jitters before an important phone call. “If I do this for a minute, I’m exhausted, but I also feel the most amazing calm.” wd