

# 10 Easy and Free Ways to Find Peace When You're Stressed Out

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You can go to an expensive wellness retreat to get peace of mind. Or you can use some tips from relaxation experts to bring the peace home. There's no need to spend money in pursuit of a stress-free life.

We talked to two wellness experts from Miraval Arizona Resort and Spa in Tucson, Arizona, about simple things you can do each day to relieve stress and improve your mental health. Staying mindful and balanced, living in the moment, and avoiding triggers are just some of the techniques they suggested.

Jess Holzworth is a spiritual life coach and yoga, meditation, and breathwork instructor. Carolyn Fike teaches practical meditation and how to incorporate the seven chakras into the practice.

Here are their 10 ways to cultivate a stress-free life without spending a dime.

## 1. Cultivate Gratitude for Mental Health

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With everything going on around us that is worrisome, be it personal or on a larger societal scale, it is important to remember the good things.

“When we get into a negative headspace, it makes our world feel small. But when you're in a headspace of gratitude, it gives you a feeling of interconnectedness, which is a strong human emotion,” Holzworth said.

Remember the physical things you might otherwise take for granted: Your heart is beating and your legs allow you to walk, for instance. The same is true for your surroundings: Your toilet flushes and you have running water. These are things to be thankful for, too.

Finding simple ways to focus on the positive is a form of stress relief that will “make your heart happy,” Holzworth said. “It has a physical and psychological effect on your whole being.”

## 2. Live in the Moment Through Mindfulness

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Mindfulness is being conscious and aware of surroundings to move as close to being stress free as possible. Thinking about everything you have to do and how little time you have to do it doesn't accomplish much except cause stress and maybe raise your blood pressure. The same is true for obsessing about the past, which is something you can't change.

So doing little things to stay in the moment can help mental health and relieve stress levels.

And guess what? It's not about adding anything to your do list. “It's just about bringing your full presence to whatever you do, wherever you are, and however you're feeling,” Holzworth said.

“Sprinkling a few seconds of full presence throughout your day is gradually going to help you increase your capacity to feel more of your feelings and consequently feel more alive.”

## 3. Work Mindful Micropractices Into Your Life

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Little things can bring us comfort and joy — if we pay attention to them. Both practitioners encouraged what they call “micropractices of mindfulness,” or the practice of being mindful about the things we do every day.

So what does that really mean? Both suggested coffee as an example, one thing many of us use to begin our day.

You can turn this simple morning routine into a mindful micropractice, Fike said, by “really taking a moment to focus on feeling a sense of gratitude instead of a mindless routine that we all get into.”

- Notice the aroma of the coffee grounds.
- Hear the sound of the fresh coffee being poured into your cup.
- Feel the warmth on your hands as you hold the cup.
- Breathe in the steam and aroma of the fresh brew as you bring it to your lips.
- Enjoy the taste and the warmth of the coffee in your mouth and throat.

That short period of mindfulness can bring you back into control and relieve stress. And it can be adapted to any simple activity.

“It’s really about opening yourself to the small things like the taste of your coffee. It’s not just about the big things, it’s the little things that bring us comfort and joy,” Holzworth said. “(It could be) the touch of your cat’s fur, the sound of his purr.”

Both suggest looking for brief moments throughout your day when you could incorporate mindfulness. The warmth of towels when they come out of the dryer. The sensation of warm water covering you in the shower. Even the rewarding repetition of folding clothes.

“Anything can be done mindfully,” Fike said.

“Be in the present moment,” Holzworth said. “Life is a gift and it should be treated like that and honored.”

## 4. Embrace the Commute

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Fike said that even your commute to work, school, or wherever you’re going can be a time for mindfulness instead of craziness.

How can your commute reduce stress? Here are two ways:

- Listen to something you enjoy to help make the drive less stressful.
- When stopped at a stoplight or stop sign, take a look around. Notice things you might not have seen before, like a store, restaurant, or even a pretty tree. “Some people pretend that Buddha is winking at them when they get a red light,” Fike said.

It’s all about bringing yourself back “to something more pleasant rather than something irritating,” Fike said.

Think of these moments as reminders. “A reminder of impermanence, a reminder to be mindful, a reminder not to take the red light personally. They are all reminders to slow down.”

## 5. Pay Attention to Your Senses

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“Anything engaging your senses is going to increase mindfulness and bring you into the present moment,” Holzworth said.

That can be the sight of a beautiful sunrise or sunset, the smell of flowers, the sound of the ocean or the taste of something yummy.

“How many times do you literally inhale your food? Instead, slow down and chew it. When you chew your food thoroughly and mindfully, it’s amazing how different it tastes,” Fike said. “When you’re eating anyway, why not do it mindfully?”

Finances can cause stress. To combat that, check out these six ways to treat yourself and your wallet to find some inner peace.

## 6. Relieve Stress with Laughter

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Why does the sound of a baby giggling instantly make us happy?

First of all, because we noticed it. “That’s a mindfulness moment,” Holzworth said.

Next, because we usually giggle, too. “Even us giggling is a mindfulness moment.”

Laughter is a break from the part of your brain that is analyzing and planning, she said. It’s a way to engage the part of your brain that is intuition, creativity, insight. “When we giggle, we let our guard down a little bit. It’s a complete relief. Laughter is great for our health.”

If a giggle can help, think of what a good belly laugh could do to lower your blood pressure and relieve stress?

## 7. Breathe to Relieve

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You need to breathe to live, but breath can reduce and relieve stress, too.

Holzworth explained that there is a sympathetic and parasympathetic part of the nervous system. Both control the involuntary functions of your body. The sympathetic nervous system helps your body handle stress — think “fight or flight” reflexes. The parasympathetic system controls your bodily functions when at rest — think “rest and digest.”

“Unfortunately, I’d say the majority of our population, and especially right now, is living sympathetic-dominant,” Holzworth said. “These people are existing in this world of fight or flight response in a state of stress.”

That means that to live a stress-free life we all need more parasympathetic responses in our lives, or moments when we are rested, rejuvenated, relaxed and restored.

That’s where your breath comes in.

“Your breath is a master regulator. Taking a few deep breaths is going to stimulate your vagus nerve and send a signal to your brain that says relax and calm down,” she said. “Just close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, and I guarantee everybody who does that is going to feel better.”

## 8. Find Your Own Way to Meditate

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Meditation means different things to different people. Fike said she didn’t connect to silent meditation at first, so she embraced guided meditations for help with stress reduction.

Mindfulness and meditation go together, but are not the same. Simplified, mindfulness is being aware, and can fit into many parts of your day. Meditation is often an activity for a certain period of time.

Many apps and YouTube videos exist to teach you the basics, guide you through short meditations and offer other meditation exercises.

As you're trying them out, Fike said, it is important to find a voice that resonates with you and that you like listening to. If you don't like the voice, you won't pay attention to what they're saying.

Almost all guided meditations will involve focusing on breathing and reminding you about your physical body, such as the feeling in your toes and the top of your head.

There are also walking meditations and meditations around simple tasks you routinely do.

You can meditate anywhere your feet are, Fike said, such as moving from the couch to the bathroom.

“What you're focusing on is how your feet are moving, how your feet feel as they connect to the ground, how your bones, tendons and muscles all work in symphony with each other as you put one foot down and lift the other one up.

“It's just taking a break to focus on something that you normally wouldn't do.”

## 9. Detox From Your Electronics

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Phones and other electronic devices are our constant companions, but putting them down for even a few minutes can be a way to focus on the present and remove potentially stressful triggers.

Fike recommends not letting your devices beckon you, especially when you're having a conversation with someone else. Most things do not need an immediate response.

Your blood pressure and stress hormones will thank you if you just put the phone down for a while.

## 10. Don't Stress About De-stressing

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Both Fike and Holzworth said trying to be stress-free isn't about changing behaviors or adding all kinds of things into your already busy day. It's about incorporating things you already do to help reduce stress.

Fike uses her own mindfulness and meditation practices as an example. These practices can show how life literally slows down and you can combat stress.

“I’m not sitting in the lotus position, meditating for an hour in silence on the top of the mountain,” she said. “I am a real life human being with real life problems and real life challenges. I take my real life experience and I present it to people who are also living real life.”

If you think that a stress-free life means upending the way you exist, you’ll just get overwhelmed. If you think that a stress-free life means upending the way you exist, you’ll just get overwhelmed. Get used to looking for self-created stress triggers.

“It’s really just about bringing more consciousness to your existence and how you interact, not only with yourself, but the rest of the world,” Holzworth said.

*Tiffani Sherman is a Florida-based freelance reporter with more than 25 years of experience writing about finance, health, travel and other topics.*