

Relaxation techniques for the mind and body

Meditation is said to control anxiety, enhance the immune system, relieve chronic pain and reduce high blood pressure and substance abuse. Simply devoting 10 or 15 minutes each day to meditation and deep breathing can help you to overcome stress and pain, and find some inner peace.

Meditation allows you to calm your mind by focusing on the here and now. In a meditative mental state, your mind becomes clear of cluttered thoughts and traumatic memories. Three common forms of meditation are:

- **Concentrative:** You focus your attention on a single sound or object. Then, you breathe slowly to bring about a calm, tranquil mind.
- **Mindful:** You keep your mind aware of things around you but you do not react to sensations, feelings or images.
- **Transcendental:** You place your body at full rest but keep your mind alert of what is going on around you. This brings about a deep state of relaxation.

During the meditative process and as a stand-alone relaxation tool, breathing is an effective self-help technique. In fact, mentally adjusting your breathing can benefit your health and sense of well-being. Deep breathing – from your abdomen – increases oxygen intake, lung capacity, energy levels and speeds up the healing process.



Healthy hints

Pain and stress can stem from physical, emotional or mental complications in life. These physiological reactions often affect emotional happiness and satisfaction. The first step in healing is to understand how the body deals with these reactions. This understanding will have a strong effect on the nature and duration of pain and stress, and will lead toward taking the steps to reduce tension and anxiety.

Control your anger before it controls you

It's natural to feel angry or frustrated. But, left uncontrolled, anger can be destructive. Before your anger gets the best of you, take a deep breath and remember these quick tips for a calmer, more peaceful you.

- **Give yourself a break:** Let the situation calm down until you can resolve the conflict with co-workers through calm, rational means.
- **Seek out a supervisor for assistance** to resolve disagreements that you cannot solve on your own.
- **To deal with feelings of anger,** taking a brisk walk, slowly repeating a calming word or talking with an understanding coworker can all help you diffuse your anger.

Techniques for you to reduce stress

The following techniques can help you reduce stress and enhance relaxation.

- 1. Breath focus.** In this simple, powerful technique, you take long, slow, deep breaths (also known as abdominal or belly breathing). As you breathe, you gently disengage your mind from distracting thoughts and sensations. Breath focus can be especially helpful for people with eating disorders to help them focus on their bodies in a more positive way. However, this technique may not be appropriate for those who have health problems that make breathing difficult, such as respiratory ailments or heart failure.
- 2. Body scan.** This technique blends breath focus with progressive muscle relaxation. After a few minutes of deep breathing, you focus on one part of the body or group of muscles at a time and mentally releasing any physical tension you feel there. A body scan can help boost your awareness of the mind-body connection.
- 3. Guided imagery.** For this technique, you conjure up soothing scenes, places, or experiences in your mind to help you relax and focus. You can find free apps and online recordings of calming scenes—just make sure to choose imagery you find soothing and that has personal significance.
- 4. Mindfulness meditation.** This practice involves sitting comfortably, focusing on your breathing, and bringing your mind's attention to the present moment without drifting into concerns about the past or the future. This form of meditation has enjoyed increasing popularity in recent years. Research suggests it may be helpful for people with anxiety, depression, and pain.

Rather than choosing just one technique, experts recommend sampling several to see which one works best for you. Try to practice for at least 20 minutes a day, although even just a few minutes can help. But the longer and the more often you practice these relaxation techniques, the greater the benefits and the more you can reduce stress.

Source: *Zywave.com*

Recipe

Healthy recipe: Grilled BBQ chicken flatbreads



Ingredients

- 2 flatbreads, store-bought or homemade
- 1 red onion, sliced (about 1 cup)
- 1 yellow or red bell pepper, sliced (about 1 cup)
- Pinch black pepper
- 12 ounces boneless skinless chicken breast
- ¼ cup barbeque sauce (choose a store-bought version that is low in salt and sugar)
- 1 tablespoon pineapple juice
- ¼ cup chopped pineapple, packed in juice
- ¼ cup shredded Monterey Jack
- 2 slices Canadian bacon, chopped

Directions

1. Preheat the grill to 500 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Place the onions and peppers on a grill tray or on a large sheet of heavy-duty foil, then sprinkle on the pepper.
3. Coat both sides of the chicken with cooking spray.
4. Transfer the vegetables and chicken to the grill. Cook the chicken three or four minutes per side, until the inside reaches 165 degrees Fahrenheit.
5. Remove the chicken and veggies from the grill, then lower the heat to 400 degrees Fahrenheit.
6. Transfer the chicken to a clean cutting board and cut into bite-size pieces.
7. Add the grilled veggies, barbecue sauce and pineapple juice to a blender and pulse until it forms a chunky sauce.
8. Place the flatbreads on a pizza stone, pizza screen or the bottom of a baking sheet prepped with nonstick spray.
9. Spread ½ cup sauce on each flatbread and top with the chicken, cheese, pineapple, and Canadian bacon and place on the grill. Close the lid and cook for about 10 minutes, until the cheese has melted.
10. Remove from heat.
11. Cool slightly before slicing and serving.

Source: *Eatingwell.com*