



Focus pocus!

To stay on task, meditate and take tech breaks.

Picture this: you, superhero cape flying in the wind, completing tasks with laser-like focus and knocking to-dos off your list with ease. Nice visual, right? Being focused and in the groove feels amazing. If your attention is not typically quite that groovy, however, you're in good company. **"Our culture demands that we become outstanding multitaskers, but this is not how the brain is designed,"** says Cleveland Clinic psychologist Scott Bea, PsyD. "So we flit back and forth with our attention." You can't exactly download a new operating system into your brain (yet!), but you can employ a low-tech approach for the same purpose. "A simple mindfulness practice is a great tool for reclaiming focus," says Bea. Set aside five minutes in the morning and at night for the following:

Sit comfortably and notice your breath. Then notice anything that takes you away from your awareness of your breath. This might be a sound, a sensation or, most commonly, a thought. Congratulate yourself for noticing that you lost focus, and guide your attention back to your breath. Also, notice during the day that you really can only focus, and focus well, on one thing at a time—and that technology, for all its benefits, can be a huge distraction. Yes, it's true that the Internet, email, apps and texting are always at your fingertips—but that doesn't mean you have to stay connected. Protect your focus by taking breaks from your devices. Seize that power and you'll be able to seize the day!

By: Cleveland Clinic Wellness Editors

DON'T WORRY, BE GRATEFUL: FIVE MINUTES A DAY CAN SHIFT YOUR PERSPECTIVE AND LOWER STRESS.

The stress-relief fantasy: meditation followed by a yoga class, a massage and a long walk with a friend. The stress-relief reality: It's hard to fit one of those things into your busy schedule. But if you can find five minutes — you can! That's all it takes to shift your perspective, and that inner shift creates a cascade of benefits. Try this exercise from Cleveland Clinic behavioral health specialist Jane Ehrman, MEd:

1

Sit comfortably with your eyes gently closed. Focus your attention on your breath, noticing how it feels to breathe in and out. This will help to quiet your mind. When your mind wanders, simply refocus back to your breath. Continue for about a minute.

2

Bring to mind the positive blessings in your life, such as being alive and feeling grateful for your level of wellness, doing meaningful work, having people in your life who love you, or whatever rings true to you. Continue for a few more minutes. Then open your eyes.

When you tap into the gratitude within yourself, your energy levels rise and negative thoughts begin to dissipate. Those mountains you see everywhere? They're suddenly molehills — or, at least, mountains you know you can climb.

By: Cleveland Clinic Wellness Editors



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It turns out that laughter really might just be the best medicine. More and more research supports the idea that laughing is good for us! ***“I think it’s a great form of stress relief, and keeps you positive and happier,”*** says Cleveland Clinic Chief Wellness Officer Michael F. Roizen, MD. It’s why I watch Jon Stewart nightly.” Read on to learn why mirth is good for you!

LAUGH IT UP TO BOOST YOUR HEALTH

Think funny thoughts

In fact, researchers have learned that it’s not only laughter itself that can bestow health benefits; they’ve discovered that even the anticipation of a positive humorous laughter experience reduces potentially detrimental stress hormones. In an earlier study, Lee Berk, DrPH and his team at Loma Linda University found that the anticipation of “mirthful laughter” positively affected two hormones: beta-endorphins, which alleviate depression, and human growth hormone, which helps with immunity. The results were significant, increasing hormone levels from 27 to 87 percent.

In the latest research, the good news continues: The same anticipation of laughter significantly reduced the levels of three stress hormones—cortisol (“the stress hormone”), epinephrine (also known as adrenaline) and dopamine (which helps produce epinephrine). Based on the findings, it’s clear that a great way to reduce stress is to seek out experiences that might make you feel like laughing, even if you don’t actually giggle.

Laugh it up to reduce pain

If chronic pain has got you down, spend time with a funny friend, rent a sidesplitting movie or go see some stand-up at your local comedy club. Laughing can help take the edge off your discomfort. But polite titters won’t cut it. To get the soothing benefits, your laugh should be hearty and unrestrained. And the longer you laugh, the higher your pain tolerance. Researchers found that cracking up for just 15 minutes decreased distress by 10 percent. The reason: Laughing releases endorphins, those feel-good chemicals that give you a buzz during exercise. Not only do the brain chemicals boost mood, they also bust pain. Consider them your body’s natural source of morphine. That’s why exercise can also be a great remedy for people who suffer from chronic pain. Find a workout buddy who makes you howl and you’ve got yourself a double-whammy weapon against pain.



Chortle your way to mind-body benefits

Here are 10 benefits of making your health a laughing matter:

- Relieves stress and tension
- Increases endorphins and the body’s tolerance to pain
- Boosts immune system function
- Decreases depression and increases life satisfaction
- Lowers blood pressure and improves heart function
- Lowers blood glucose levels
- Modifies negative perceptions and boosts mood
- Increases optimism, resilience, self-efficacy and positive emotions in the workplace
- Improves relationship satisfaction
- Builds confidence and sheds social barriers

Cultivate more laughter in your life and you may just find that living well gets a whole lot easier.

By: *Cleveland Clinic Wellness Editors*



Healthy Recipe

ROASTED PARMESAN BROCCOLI WITH QUINOA PILAF

Deceptively simple, this dish surprises on at least two counts: it's terrifically tasty and super satisfying! The trick to irresistible broccoli is in the roasting, and with the added Parmesan, you'll be hooked. And then there's the quinoa pilaf (file it under "great idea"!), with its yummy nuttiness. Together you've got a veggie entrée or side dish with filling fiber and health-promoting phytonutrients.

Yield: 4 Servings

Ingredients:

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- ½ of a yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1 cup quinoa (mixed, yellow, or red)
- ¼ cup chopped fresh flat leaf parsley
- 1 bunch broccoli (usually 1-2 heads, approximately 1½ lbs.)
- 1/8 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/8 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 2 tablespoons grated Parmesan
- 1 lemon, cut into wedges

Instructions:

In a medium saucepan, heat 1 tablespoon of the oil over medium-high heat. Add the onion and cook, stirring often, until softened, 3 to 5 minutes. Stir in the quinoa, then add 2 cups of water. Bring to a boil, cover tightly, reduce heat to low, and cook until the water is absorbed, 12 to 15 minutes. Remove from the heat, fluff with a fork, cover again, and let stand for 15 minutes. Stir in the parsley.

While quinoa is resting, heat the oven to 425°F. Cut each head of broccoli (crown and stem) crosswise into ½-inch thick slices. Put on a rimmed sheet pan and drizzle with the remaining tablespoon oil; toss to coat. Sprinkle with the salt, pepper, and Parmesan and toss again. Roast until tender and barely charred at the edges, about 15 minutes.

Divide the quinoa and broccoli among plates and serve with a wedge of lemon.

Nutrition Info Per Serving:

(4 servings) 246 calories, 10 g total fat, 2 g saturated fat, 8 g protein, 33 g carbohydrate, 4.7 g dietary fiber, 1 g sugar, 2 mg cholesterol, 134 mg sodium

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