

# Words of Wellness

November 2013

## RELAXATION

by Janice Shaw and Robin Buchanan and Eileen Anderson, NBTA Staff

### Massage: Get in touch with its many benefits

A soothing massage can help you unwind, but that's not all. Explore the possible benefits of massage and what to expect.

*Abridged version By Mayo Clinic staff*

#### Benefits of massage

Massage is generally considered part of complementary and alternative medicine. It's increasingly being offered along with standard treatment for a wide range of medical conditions and situations.

Studies of the benefits of massage demonstrate that it is an effective treatment for reducing stress, pain and muscle tension.

While more research is needed to confirm the benefits of massage, some studies have found massage may also be helpful for:

- Anxiety
- Digestive disorders
- Fibromyalgia
- Headaches
- Insomnia related to stress
- Soft tissue strains or injuries
- Sports injuries
- Temporomandibular joint pain

Beyond the benefits for specific conditions or diseases, some people enjoy massage because it often involves caring, comfort, a sense of empowerment and creating deep connections with their massage therapist.

*Did you know that Johnson Insurance Pays \$600/year for massage and \$600/year for Active Release Therapy (ART)?*

### Get off the Grid

We have serious connections to our cell phones.

In fact, research has shown that more than half of us may have "nomophobia," or the fear of being phone-less. Students between send an average of 109.5 text messages a day and check their phones an average of 60 times per day.

While we may fear the absence of our smartphones, unplugging does have its benefits: Taking 10-minute breaks can improve your productivity. And practicing mindfulness -- or the act of being present (read: not buried in your phone) -- has been shown to reduce stress, ward off symptoms of depression and anxiety and improve the ability to focus and relax.

Monitor your technology use. Try a day without it, an evening... will it set you free?

*The Huffington Post | By Kate Bratskeir*



### Techniques That Zap Stress

Managing stress is key to staying healthy. Don't have time? Here are some techniques you can do very quickly.

**1. Meditate.** Sit up straight with both feet on the floor. Close your eyes. Focus your attention on reciting -- out loud or silently -- a positive mantra such as "I feel at peace" or "I love myself." Let any distracting thoughts float by like clouds.

**2. Breathe Deeply.** Give yourself a 5-minute break from whatever is bothering you and focus instead on your breathing. Sit up straight, eyes closed, with a hand on your belly. Slowly inhale through your nose, feeling the breath start in your abdomen and work its way to the top of your head. Reverse the process as you exhale through your mouth.

**3. Be Present.** When you spend time in the moment and focus on your senses, you should feel the tension leave your body.

**4. Reach Out.** Talking to others -- preferably face-to-face or at least on the phone -- is a great way to better manage whatever is stressing you out.

**5. Tune In to Your Body.** Mentally scan your body to get a sense of how stress affects it each day. Lie on your back or sit with your feet on the floor. Start at your toes and work your way up to your scalp, noticing how your body feels.

**6. Decompress.** Place a warm heat wrap around your neck and shoulders for 10 minutes. Close your eyes and relax your face, neck, upper chest, and back muscles. Remove the wrap and use a tennis ball or foam roller to massage away tension.

**7. Laugh Out Loud.** A good belly laugh doesn't just lighten the load mentally. It lowers cortisol, your body's stress hormone, while increasing brain chemicals called endorphins that boost your mood. Lighten up by tuning in to your favorite sitcom or video, reading the comics, or chatting with someone who makes you smile.

**8. Crank Up the Tunes.** Research shows that listening to soothing music can lower blood pressure, heart rate, and anxiety. You can blow off steam by rocking out to more upbeat tunes -- or singing at the top of your lungs!

**9. Get Moving.** You don't have to run in order to get a runner's high. All forms of exercise -- from yoga to walking. You can go for a quick walk around the block, take the stairs up and down a few flights, or do some stretching exercises like head rolls and shoulder shrugs.

**10. Be Grateful.** Keep a gratitude journal or several (stash one by your bed, keep one in your purse, and one at work) to help you remember all the things that are good in your life.

*By Jeannette Moninger, WebMD Feature*

### Recipe for Relaxation

1 heaping cup of laughter

2 cups of healthy food

1/2 hour of exercise (preferably the fresh air kind)

Generous handfuls of quiet

Sprinkle with love