![Sentara logo] **Sentara**®

7 Days to De-Stressing

Stress is a normal part of life, but a lack of healthy coping methods can affect your health. Complete each of these exercises over 7 days to discover a new habit that works for you.

Day 1

Try this breathing exercise anytime you're feeling anxious or overwhelmed. Get comfortable by lying on your back or sitting in a chair that supports your back and neck. Place one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest. Take a deep breath letting your lungs fill with air. As you exhale, feel your chest lower. Take three more full, deep breaths.

Day 2

Choose a space in your home to declutter, like a closet or pantry. Maintaining a spacious and organized environment is a great way to relieve stress.

Day 3

Try guided meditation. There are many free virtual options that will help anyone new to this practice. Set aside a few minutes today to fully immerse yourself in the experience and get your mind off of anything that may be consuming you.

Day 4

Spend 15 minutes journaling to safely get your thoughts and feelings out in the open. Remember that you don't have to share this with anyone, so you can be as honest as you choose to be.

Day 5

Walk with mindfulness, focusing on the walk itself, rather than a device. Go for a walk around your neighborhood, forest, in a park, or near a body of water. Be mindful of your surroundings and your breath. Exercise signals your body to release endorphins, so going for a walk can improve your mood.

Day 6

Unplug from social media and news outlets. Spend the first 20 minutes of your morning doing something for yourself like journaling, reading a book, or exercising. Later in the evening, you can turn your phone on "Do not Disturb" mode to help you wind down before bed.

Day 7

Ask a loved one for a hug or cuddle with a pet. Positive physical touch releases oxytocin, reduces cortisol levels, and lowers your heart rate and blood pressure.