

Steps, Tips & Routines to Control Stress

Daily habits that lower stress before it builds up

Stress itself isn't the enemy — it's a normal response your body is built for. The problem is chronic, unmanaged stress, where your body never gets the signal to switch off. This guide covers simple routines for your morning, day and evening, quick techniques for the moment stress actually hits, foods that support your body's stress response, and habits worth cutting out.

Morning Routine

How you start your morning sets your stress baseline for the whole day

Avoid checking your phone first 15-20 minutes	Jumping straight into messages/news spikes cortisol before your day even begins.
Get sunlight within an hour of waking	Morning light exposure helps regulate cortisol rhythm and improves mood through the day.
5-10 minutes of stretching or light movement	Gets blood flowing and signals to your body that it's safe, lowering baseline tension.
Eat a proper breakfast, don't skip it	Stabilizes blood sugar early, preventing the irritability and anxious energy low blood sugar can cause.

Through The Day

Small resets spread through the day prevent stress from building up unnoticed

Take short breaks every 60-90 minutes	Continuous focus without breaks raises mental fatigue and stress hormones over time.
Step outside or near a window for a few minutes	Natural light and a change of environment helps reset your nervous system.
Keep a running to-do list instead of holding it all in your head	Offloading tasks onto paper reduces the mental load that causes background anxiety.
Do one task at a time where possible	Constant task-switching keeps your brain in a low-grade stress state — single-tasking lowers it.
Stay hydrated through the day	Even mild dehydration can worsen mood, focus and perceived stress levels.

Evening Wind-Down

Your evening routine decides how well your body actually recovers overnight

Set a screen cut-off 30-45 minutes before bed	Reduces blue light and late-night stimulation that keep cortisol elevated at night.
Do a 5-minute brain dump before bed	Writing down tomorrow's worries gets them out of your head so they don't loop while you try to sleep.
Keep a consistent sleep and wake time	A regular sleep schedule helps your body's stress-hormone rhythm stay predictable and stable.
Light stretching or deep breathing before bed	Activates your parasympathetic (rest) nervous system, helping you fall asleep faster.

Quick In-The-Moment Techniques

For when stress hits suddenly and you need to calm down fast

Box breathing (4-4-4-4)	Inhale 4 seconds, hold 4, exhale 4, hold 4 — slows your heart rate and interrupts the stress spiral almost immediately.
5-4-3-2-1 grounding	Name 5 things you see, 4 you hear, 3 you feel, 2 you smell, 1 you taste — pulls your mind out of spiraling thoughts.
Splash cold water on your face / wrists	Triggers a reflex that quickly slows your heart rate during acute stress.
Step away for a 2-minute walk	Physical movement burns off stress hormones that are already circulating in your body.

Foods That Help Control Stress

What you eat can either fuel stress or help your body manage it better

Leafy Greens (Palak, Methi)	Magnesium supports healthy cortisol regulation and nervous system function.
Nuts & Seeds (Almonds, Pumpkin Seeds)	Magnesium and healthy fats help buffer the body's stress response.
Curd / Yogurt	Gut-friendly probiotics support the gut-brain connection, which plays a real role in mood and stress.
Bananas	Potassium and B6 support nervous system function and help regulate mood swings.
Dark Chocolate (in moderation)	Can lower cortisol slightly and improve mood when eaten in small amounts.

Habits To Avoid

These habits quietly keep your stress levels elevated without you noticing

Doom-scrolling news or social media	Keeps your nervous system in a constant low-grade alert state.
Excess caffeine, especially later in the day	Can worsen anxiety symptoms and interfere with the sleep you need to recover from stress.
Skipping meals or under-eating	Causes blood sugar swings that mimic and worsen stress and anxiety symptoms.
Bottling up how you feel instead of talking to someone	Unexpressed stress tends to build up rather than resolve on its own.
Overcommitting to avoid saying no	Chronic overload is one of the most common and preventable sources of ongoing stress.

Note: This guide covers general lifestyle habits for everyday stress and is not a substitute for professional support. If stress feels constant, overwhelming or is affecting your daily life, please speak with a doctor or mental health professional.