

# Science Shows Us How We Can Stress Less

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A 2015 *Bloomberg* study revealed South Africa as the second-most stressed country in the world. (1) In 2017, these statistics still seem plausible. While the 'flight or fight' response we get from stress is all part of basic human survival. Persistent stress was not something we had to worry about until modern society evolved.

Today, health problems due to persistent stress – are the cause for 60-80% of doctors visits in the US alone. Constant stress can increase your risk of depression, heart diseases, diabetes and/or strokes. It has also proven to lead to [overeating](#) or drug and alcohol abuse.

While it may seem trivial, there are daily things you can do to help relieve your stress and keep you focused. Unlike a 5 day beach getaway – these won't break the bank.

## 1. Colour me good

Color therapy is the practice of using colors, to help balance your emotions. According to the *American Research Journal of Pharmacy*: because colors have various effects on the brain part of your brain that determines mood, they can be used as a part of stress management. (2) At home, surround yourself with [calming colors](#) such as blue, green and neutral tones. Alternatively, try a little beauty therapy: painting your nails is known to be a calming task, and you can choose a calming color for your manicure as well.

## 2. Chew on this

Chewing is also known to help relieve the tension in your face and jaw when you're stressed. The crunchier the food is – the better your mood can be.(3) The extra effort you put in to breaking down your food can actually distract you from negative thoughts – so what are you waiting for? Grab some [biltong or chewy dates](#) and get munching.

### 3. Tuck into a wholesome bowl of oats

It may be hard to believe, but some carbs are your friend and not your enemy. Certain carbohydrates can boost your serotonin levels and this is perfect for stress management.(4) Oats are filled with magnesium and potassium, that not only help with serotonin production, but they can also [lower you blood pressure](#).

### 4. Ear massage

While a [full-body reflexology massage](#) would be ideal for stress relief – you cannot give yourself one at the office. In saying that, you can definitely rub your ears. (Maybe in private?) Rubbing the pressure points on your ears is known to release serotonin, making it ideal for stress management.(5)

### 5. Smell something pretty

Smell is the first sense you develop as a baby. All scents go up through our nose and into our brain via the olfactory nerve which gives the 'sensory message' to the parts of our brain responsible for mood and memory. Do you remember getting a whiff your mom's cooking in the evenings as a child? Of course you do – because it'll either make you excited at the prospect of good food, or disappointed at the prospect of terrible food.(6) Scent and memory have a strong correlation so try to sniff things that brings back positive memories or are [known to calm the nervous system](#) such as citrus fruits, lavender or jasmine.

### 6. Do the dishes

This may not be your favorite of tasks, but it's guaranteed you have to do it anyway. Studies show that by performing mundane activities, such as household chores, we are actively relieving stress.(7) And because nothing is more mundane than washing dishes – this is what one particular study based there findings on, however, [any other monotonous tasks](#) should have the same effect.

### 7. Sit up straight if you want to smile

According to a study conducted by The University of Auckland, [good posture isn't just good for your muscles](#), it's also great for your mood.(8) Sitting up straight works as a coping mechanism for stress. Your brain receives information about your posture, and it then translates this information into a correlating emotion. A confident posture will lift your mood, while slouching will do the opposite.

### 8. Warm hugs

Sometimes all you need is a hug to keep happy, and this is a sentiment that neuro-economist Paul Zak, agrees with.(9) Oxytocin – known as [the love hormone](#) – rises when we share a hug. In fact, Eight hugs a day can decrease your stress hormone, cortisol and lower your blood pressure as well as heart rate. Other forms of physical contact, such as a pat on the back, can have a similar effect.

### 9. Exercise is good for the body and mood

If you don't want to exercise to keep fit – do it to keep happy. [Exercise](#) has always been seen as a stress reliever, and there's a reason for this: when you exercise, your brain secretes the happy hormones, endorphins. (10) It also enhances your immune system and increases your body temperature – which automatically helps to calm you down.

## 10. Crank up the tunes

It's definitely not a bad thing if you like to get lost in good music. In fact, keep it up! A study by *Nature Neuroscience* has shown that when you [listen to your favorite songs](#), large amounts of dopamine are released which promotes feelings of pleasure and happiness. (11) This is why nothing eases your stress like a really good tune.

While we do advise you try as many of these easy and manageable tips as possible. You should definitely consult a professional if you feel you're beginning to suffer from chronic stress and fear your health is deteriorating.