



Be active

Engaging in pleasant and varied activities has been consistently linked with significant mood improvement. Symptoms of depression and anxiety are usually associated with limiting one's activities due to fatigue, low motivation, anxiety, or fear. Unfortunately, this not only limits situational distress but also the chance of having a positive experience. By being active, you'll give yourself the opportunity to get out of your mind and into your life.

Quicktips:

- **Start with what you used to enjoy.** Focus on activities that you know helped your mood in the past.
- **Make a list of activities.** Brainstorming can be fun. If you're stuck, go to: oafc.stanford.edu/coppes.html
- **Do it, even if you don't feel like it.** A well-known rule of human behavior is 'motivation follows action'.
- **Monitor your mood.** Keeping track of how you feel before and after can help you know what's working.
- **Keep at it.** Emotional well-being is not a natural homeostatic state, but rather an active pursuit.



Balance your thinking

The symptoms of depression and anxiety include a tendency towards overly negative thinking. You can learn to challenge this thinking and end up with a more balanced perspective, which buffers against the downward mood spiral.

Quicktips:

- **Identify the thoughts that bother you most.** Challenging these will have the most positive impact.
- **Consider the evidence that you have for and against the thought.** Focus on facts, not your beliefs.
- **Ask yourself: what's the worst that can happen?** Is your fear based on a realistic chain of events?
- **Consider a more rational response.** Acknowledge a chance for bad and the greater chance for neutral.
- **Repeat, repeat, repeat.** Continue to monitor yourself for overly-negative thoughts and reapply these tips.



Move your body

Virtually any form of exercise can act as a stress reliever, everything from simply stretching to lifting weights to full-on aerobic exercise. Exercise should always be part of a stress management plan, no matter what activities you choose.

Quicktips:

- **Consult your doctor.** Find out what type of movement and what level of exercise is safe for you.
- **Focus on what you like doing.** Aim for a number of different activities that you can switch between.
- **Involve a friend.** This can make exercise more fun, and it increases the probability of follow-through.
- **Set goals.** Setting reasonable goals and fulfilling them increases motivation.
- **Make it a routine.** A one-time trip to the gym will help relieve stress... just that one time.



Take frequent breaks

The cycle of stress and anxiety is maintained by narrowing one's attention on stressors, pressures, and deadlines. Frequent breaks allow you to expand attention. For example, by focusing on your environment, your breath, your body sensations, or on other people and events, you'll promote a broader perspective, which will, in turn, buffer stress.

Quicktips:

- **Focus on your body.** Choose 4 or 5 favorite stretches and do them at least twice per day.
- **Notice your breath.** Practice mindfulness or diaphragmatic breathing techniques.
- **Be social.** Talk to someone in person instead of contacting them via phone or email.
- **Take in your environment.** Take a walk around your office, home, or building, and especially outside.
- **Be present.** Attend to the events happening in your immediate environment, not inside your mind.