

Tips for Reducing Stress Reactions and Creating Peace

~Meditate daily. Even if just for 5 minutes, meditating every day helps to calm the nervous system, center and ground you and help refocus your energy. If done in the morning, it can help you create a positive direction for the day.

~Deep, slow breathing. You can count the inhales and exhales, breathe through the nose or mouth, or alternate, close your eyes or keep them open. The main thing is to create a slow, steady rhythm.

~Visualize things that you feel happy about and really feel the happiness as if they're happening right now. Let the feeling build.

~Become aware of each time you have a negative thought, and see if you can reframe it to something neutral or positive. Do this without judgment...just notice and shift.

~Practice mindfulness exercises. Pay attention to everything around you in this moment with all of your senses; notice a tiny detail of something nearby; take a moment to scan through your body to see how it feels; slow down when you eat and really notice how your food tastes...every bite.

~Take time for yourself. Sit with a mug of tea and an uplifting book, watch a motivating or peaceful video, do yoga or Tai Chi, workout, walk the dog, draw or paint, take a bath, etc. It may seem selfish, but you really need to do this by yourself now and then so you can recharge and be able to be the parent/spouse/sibling/friend/employee you want to be.

~Engage with nature. If you can, go for a walk or bike ride or kayak trip or ski. Pay attention to the beauty all around and breathe in the energy. If you can't go out, look at some nature images until you find one that really resonates, leaves you feeling peaceful, and gaze at it for several minutes. Create a slideshow of such images to watch often.

~Set aside time specifically for meals. Eating on the run, or while working or completing multiple tasks, keeps you in fight-or-flight mode. Eating slowly with purpose and no distractions allow the body to rest-and-digest and gain all of the nutrients from the food you're ingesting.

~Create a realistic schedule. Plan only the amount of to-dos that you truly have time for without running from place to place or multi-tasking. If you know you won't really have time for something, move it to the top of the list for the next day rather than trying to cram it into today's schedule, then remove judgment about not getting it done today.

~Listen to relaxing music or frequency-based recordings (solfeggio frequencies).