



Feeling Peaceful and Serene

December Education

Why Peace & Serenity are Important

The body is “ingeniously” equipped with natural self-healing mechanisms that get flipped on or off, depending on the state of the nervous system.

When the nervous system is in the “fight-or-flight” sympathetic mode, which Walter Cannon at Harvard coined the “stress response,” the body’s self-healing mechanisms are flipped off. The body is not concerned about preventing infection, avoiding heart disease or fighting cancer if it thinks you’re about to get eaten by a tiger!

But when the body is in what Herbert Benson at Harvard called the “relaxation response,” and the parasympathetic nervous system takes the lead, the body’s natural self-healing mechanisms are activated, and the body knows how to heal itself, as demonstrated so powerfully by the research on [the placebo effect](#).

What this boils down to is a crucial public health message:

If you want to optimize your health, extend your life expectancy, and feel as vital as possible, you need to help your nervous system live in a state of peace.

Peace is what the body, mind, and spirit craves more than any of the other things we tend to seek out.

Ideas for Creating Peace & Serenity

Inner peace is easy to find when you're fresh from, say, a silent mountaintop retreat. But where is it when you really need it? You know, when a cutting remark has you mad at the world—or while you sit, late for an appointment, in standstill traffic. Been there?

Truth is, you can always tap your inner lama if you remember to employ strategic mind soothers. Some techniques, such as a daily reminder of what you're grateful for, make you feel calmer, right down to having a more relaxed heartbeat, says Sara Gottfried, MD, the author of *The Hormone Reset Diet*. That calm can last even through a stress-riddled day. Here are some ways to trigger your inner chill.

1. Do the ho'oponopono

This Hawaiian ritual calms you down. It's all about forgiveness. Murmuring the ho'oponopono mantra several times (“I'm sorry. Please forgive me. I love you. Thank you.”) eases your anger and could lower your blood pressure when you're mad at someone, says Dr. Gottfried.

2. Spritz a scent

You don't have to wait for a spa visit to make the most of essential oils. Take yourself to the essential oil counter at your favorite natural-products store and sniff the testers till you find one or two that give you a feeling of calm and enjoyment. Good ones to try include lavender, orange, clary sage, and ylang-ylang.

3. Smile when you're stuck in traffic

When smiling turns out to be a mood booster for customer service reps (who must tactfully deal with the crankiest people on the planet), you know it's worth a try. A 2011 study conducted at Michigan State University found that customer-service employees who smiled throughout the day by thinking positive thoughts reported feeling more serene overall. Though it may be hard to find the joy in a traffic jam, smiling does wonders to lower your body's stress response and quells any road rage feelings, according to a study published recently in *Psychological Science*. Even when you don't feel like doing it, smiling relaxes you—so lift those lip corners, already.

4. Plant something

According to a recent study by Dutch researchers, gardening is an even more effective stress reliever than reading a good book. There's also evidence that microbes in the soil may lift your mood, according to a British study conducted in 2007.

5. Wake up early

Get up by 7 AM and you'll be happier, a new UK study reveals. Start with a stretch, and you'll not only loosen your muscles, you'll also calm your mind. “When cats get up, they stretch—they're masters at the practices we spend years trying to perfect in yoga,” says Carol Krucoff, a yoga therapist at Duke Integrative

Medicine and the author of *Yoga Sparks: 108 Easy Practices for Stress Relief in a Minute or Less* (coming in August). Try this simple [stress-busting yoga routine](#) to relax.

6. Meditate....outside

The evidence for daily meditation is mounting, says a recent Massachusetts General Hospital and Boston University study. Turns out, meditation positively affects your brain—even when you're not actively meditating. We know that "several weeks of meditation can shrink a region of the brain linked to anxiety and expands a region associated with emotions and memory," says Gaelle Desbordes, PhD, a research fellow at MGH's Martinos Center for Biomedical Imaging. Need more than indoor meditation? A 2011 Scottish study found that being outdoors ups mental health benefits by 50% over exercising in a gym. So slo-o-o-owly stroll a garden and focus on the beauty you see. Instant serenity, we promise. (Think you're not into meditation? Think again with these [meditation techniques that match your personality](#).)

7. Plan a grown-up playdate

Find serenity by hanging out with pals or playing a group sport, says Laura Kubzansky, PhD, a Harvard School of Public Health associate professor: "My guess is that many people who are chronically distressed never figured out how to rebound from a bad experience or change their perspective." Friends who make you happy help you bounce back and regain your inner peace.

8. Restore with rhodiola

When you're not having much luck with other been-there, done-that stress-reduction techniques, you may need an herb that enables your body to respond more appropriately to the stress siren. Try rhodiola, an "adaptogen" that's prized for its ability to help people modulate the stress response. Proof? A study published in the *Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* showed that taking rhodiola reduces feelings of anxiety, depression, and fatigue. One caveat: Rhodiola can overstimulate some users, causing insomnia and irritability. "It's best for people who feel exhausted and need a lift," says David Winston, a clinical herbalist and the author of *Adaptogens: Herbs for Strength, Stamina, and Stress Relief*.

9. Schedule specific times to reset your system

Set your phone or watch alarm, stop what you're doing, and regroup. And yes, there's an app for that—it's called the Mindfulness Bell, modeled after a practice in Buddhist monasteries.

10. EXERCISE

If you've ever watched a Zumba class, you've seen that dancing like a maniac seems to make people very, very happy. That's because being really active teaches us how to manage stress better, according to the results of recent research from the University of Wyoming. "This study was particularly interesting because the researchers found that if a person worked out for 30 minutes, she was able to withstand a stressful situation afterward without reacting as intensely," says Holly Parker, PhD, a psychology lecturer at Harvard University. "There's reason to believe that the same benefits that come from exercise can help us adapt to the stress of life."

11. Play with animals

Quickly flip the nervous system into relaxation response with the unconditional love of a dog or cat which can fill you with oxytocin and endorphins and activate the body's natural self-healing mechanisms while filling your heart and spirit with nurturing peace.

12. Create

Make art, play music, sing, dance, or even set an artful dinner table to knock the system into peace and heal the body and soul

13. Start a ritual

Intentionally cultivate peace using music, scent, and anything like prayer, gathering of others, tools, etc. to put your nervous system into a peaceful state of relaxation response and to self heal regularly.

14. Create a peace playlist

Music can calm the nervous system quickly, activating the body's self-healing mechanisms and creating a state of healing resonance within the body. What kind of music soothes you? What makes you feel connected to your essence of inner peace? Treat yourself to your Peace Playlist anytime you need to shift your nervous system into relaxation response.

Click the Links Below for Source Information

9 Prescriptions for Peace of Mind

10 Ways to Find Serenity Now