

Next time you're at the end of your rope, unwrap a stick of gum. According to studies, chewing gum lowers anxiety and eases stress. Some researchers think the rhythmic act of chewing may improve blood flow to your brain, while others believe the smell and taste help you relax.



Spending time outdoors, even close to home, is linked to better well-being. You're in a natural setting, and you're usually doing something active, like walking or hiking. Even a few minutes can make a difference in how you feel.



Keeping a smile on your face – especially a genuine smile that's formed by the muscles around your eyes as well as your mouth – reduces your body's stress responses, even if you don't feel happy. Smiling also helps lower heart rates faster once your stressful situation ends.



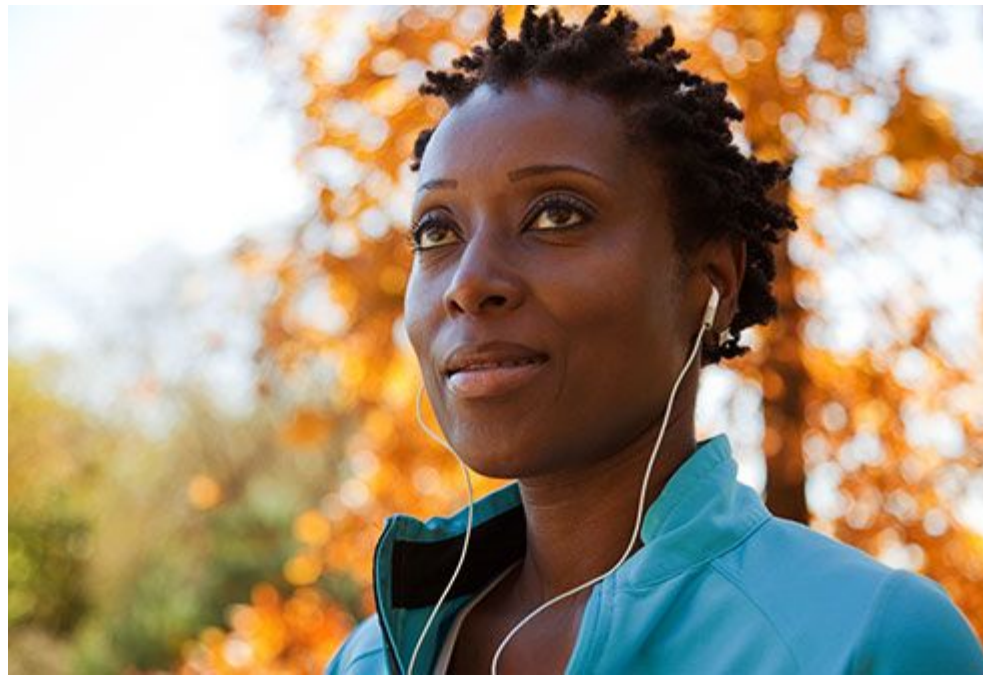
## Sniff Some Lavender

Certain scents like lavender may soothe. In one study, nurses who pinned small vials of lavender oil to their clothes felt their stress ease, while nurses who didn't felt more stressed. Lavender may intensify the effect of some painkillers and anti-anxiety medications, so if you're taking either, check with your doctor before use.





Tune In. Heading into a stressful situation? Music can help you calm down. In one study, people had lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol when they listened to a recording of Latin choral music before doing something stressful (like doing math out loud or giving a speech) than when they listened to a recording of rippling water. (Wondering what that choral piece was, music fans? Try Miserere by Gregorio Allegri.)



Reboot Your Breath. Sit comfortably in a quiet place. Breathe in slowly through your nose, letting your chest and lower belly rise and your abdomen expand. Breathe out just as slowly, repeating a word or phrase that helps you relax. To reap the most benefit, repeat for at least 10 minutes.



Be Kind to Yourself. We all have a constant stream of thoughts running through our heads, and sometimes what we tell ourselves isn't so nice. Staying positive and using compassionate self-talk will help you calm down and get a better grip on the situation. Talk to yourself in the same gentle, encouraging way you'd help a friend in need. "Everything will be OK," for instance, or "I'll figure out how to handle this."



Write Your Stress Away. Jotting down your thoughts can be a great emotional outlet. Once they're on paper, you can start working out a plan to resolve them. It doesn't matter whether you prefer pen and notebook, a phone app, or a file on your laptop. The important thing is that you're honest about your feelings.





Tell a Friend. When you're feeling overwhelmed, seek out the company of a friend or loved one. Have a friend who's dealing with the same worries as you? Even more reason to open up. You'll both feel less alone.



Get Moving. When you work up a sweat, you improve your mood, clear your head, and take a break from whatever is stressing you out. Whether you like a long walk or an intense workout at the gym, you'll feel uplifted afterward.

