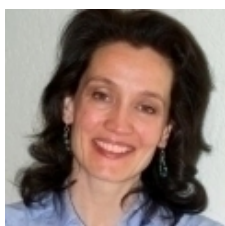


Get rid of stress right where you are

By Mandy Kendall

I think we've all had those drowsy, I-could-fall-asleep-standing-up times. They can hit you for all kinds of reasons; low blood sugar, lack of sleep or even boredom. Then there are the "I'm so stressed I could scream" times as well. So what can you really do about them?

Some of us might reach for caffeine or something sweet to perk us up, or other substances to chill us out, but in the long run is that what's best for us?



Mandy
Kendall

Most of the time artificial stimulants or depressants just mask the issues and come with myriad side effects, often making the initial issue seem pretty insignificant.

So here are a few *Qwik-e* tips (quick and easy and in most instances they take about a minute, or less) to help boost your energy levels and mood without relying on anything artificial.

Just breathe – During times of stress, high concentration or low energy, our breathing tends to get pretty shallow, which in itself doesn't help us to feel energized. So a few slow deep breaths will help increase blood flow (and wake us up)

and reduce adrenaline levels (to calm us down). Try gently pushing your shoulders down and pushing your belly out when you breathe in. You may feel a bit of tightness in your diaphragm (just below your rib cage) that can be a sign that it's not being used very much and needs a good stretch anyway. Five breaths (counting to 4 while inhaling and to 4 while exhaling) will do wonders for your body and help wake you up, or calm you down if that's what you need.

Stretch – This can be a wonderful energizer. It increases blood flow, helping to carry all that wonderful oxygen you've just breathed in around your body. I'm not necessarily talking about the kind of stretching you see people do after exercise either. I'm talking about the reach for the sky, stretch out your fingers and toes, kind of stretch. You can do this seated or standing. Just go gently and don't stretch past that 'ooh that feels good' part of the stretch. This kind of stretch is not designed to give you more flexibility, just wake up a sleepy body.

Smile – Even if we don't necessarily feel like it, smiling has a number of great health benefits. Even a fake smile can trick the brain into releasing endorphins (our happy hormones) making us feel happier, reducing stress and lowering blood pressure that in turn boosts our immune system. Smiling is also contagious, so your smile will help other people too. Not bad for something that's free and good for you.

Talk – So, you've been smiling, and people are smiling back and everyone is feeling happier, how about you take the next step and talk to them? In today's high-tech world of emails and texts we sometimes lose sight of the fact that we are social creatures who thrive best in a community. So much of our communication is through personal interaction and speaking face to face with someone conveys so much more than an email. Even calling someone achieves much more than a text. I know texts save time but try, maybe just once a day, calling someone rather than texting them. If you're really short on

time you can always start the conversation by saying, "I've only got a minute but I really wanted to hear your voice/call you/say hi and see how you're doing". If you manage to make each other laugh at the same time, it really could make a difference for both of you.

Be grateful – During stressful times it sometimes helps to put things into perspective by thinking about things we are grateful for. Just taking a few moments to count our blessings diverts our brains from forming a negative pathway in our thought processes and helps form new positive pathways instead.

You could also enlist the help of people you work with, or spend time with, to join you in some of these techniques to help counteract times of low energy or stress. Group interaction can be a great motivator and it's much more fun too!

Finally, if you feel like a bit of multitasking how about doing a few at the same time? Have a big stretch, put a smile on your face, breathe deeply and say thank you. You never know, once people realize you're not going nuts, it might just catch on.

Until next time.

Mandy Kendall operates Health Connective in South Lake Tahoe. If you have any questions, would like some advice, or would like to request some Qwik-e tips on any health and wellbeing topic, please feel free to drop me an email at healthconnective@gmail.com, visit us on Facebook, or keep an eye out on Lake Tahoe News for regular Qwik-e tips on how to make healthy changes one Quick and Easy step at a time.