

ari coach

# Stress & Immunity Guide

33 Habits & Practices to De-stress and Boost Immunity



# Impact of stress on your health



## WHY MANAGE STRESS?

Stress is sneaky. Especially right now, in the midst of the Coronavirus.

Sometimes you don't even know that you're feeling it until you turn your head and your neck hurts, Maybe you feel a constant pit in your stomach, or you notice your heart is beating faster than normal.

The truth is, **some stress is normal** ... but chronic stress (like what can be happening right now with everything going on) can do a real number on your body.

It can wreak havoc on your hormones, making you gain weight (especially unhealthy fat).

And it can also take a major toll on your health, paving the way for illness and disease.

It's never been a big secret that stress causes illness, but until recently, it was never clear HOW it played a role.

## STRESS & INFLAMMATION

But now it seems pretty clear that chronic psychological stress can affect your body's ability to regulate its inflammatory response. That's because one of your body's key stress hormones – cortisol – also plays a role in controlling inflammation.

As you likely know, inflammation is associated with practically every disease process affecting our bodies!

This guide will equip you with the tools you need to reduce your stress levels and improve your quality of health as we deal with this pandemic.

# Take back control with habits

Over time, having too many stress hormones in your system is linked with increased inflammation ... and all the problems associated with it!

What can you do about it? Most of us have been taught to “walk it off” in hopes that it would just magically go away.

“Pushing through it” is often the very WORST thing you can do to get through a tough period, since it can keep your stress hormones elevated.

Chronic stress can even become your new “normal,” so you don’t feel like yourself unless you’re under pressure.

Unfortunately, this is the case for way too many of us!

The good news is, you can take back control by learning some easy habits to help you feel less stressed.

As we say at Ari Coach, **do only ONE HABIT at a time!** Practice the habit for a few minutes daily. Then add to it when your confidence is at a 10/10.





# Breathing Techniques

Your breath is an incredibly powerful tool to combat stress. It's so important that it's worth taking several short "breathing breaks" a day.

Why?

Deep breathing helps reset your autonomic nervous system – the system that controls your automatic functions like your heartbeat, blood pressure, swallowing, etc. – into a calmer space.

It only takes 4-5 minutes to feel more relaxed and less stressed!

We've included 3 techniques to help get you started with your breathing practice: one for deep breathing, one for relaxation, and another for energy.

# 1. Belly Breathing

## Why it helps

Retrain your body to take deeper breaths from the stomach. This technique triggers the vagus nerve to activate your relaxation response - reducing your heart rate and blood pressure and lowering stress hormones ([Harvard Health](#)).

## How to do this

Belly (aka diaphragmatic) breathing sessions can be lying down or seated. Note: You might feel sleepy until you get used to it.

1. Sit comfortably in a chair, your knees bent and your shoulders, head and neck relaxed. Place one hand on your belly just below your rib cage, and the other on your upper chest.
2. Breathe in slowly through your nose, feeling your belly move out against your hand. The hand against your chest shouldn't move.
3. Next, draw your stomach in as you exhale through your mouth. Again, the hand on your upper chest should remain still.
4. Repeat for 3-5 minutes.





## 2 . Box Breathing

### Why it helps

This calming technique is used by everyone from Navy SEALs and first responders to nurses and teachers. It involves controlling both parts of your breath as well as holding your breath.

### How to do it

It's called "box" breathing because you do each part of the breath for an equal amount of time (4 counts), as if you are breathing around the sides of a square.

1. To start, sit up straight in a chair, feet flat on the floor.
2. Next, slowly exhale through your mouth as much air as you possibly can, for a total of 4 counts.
3. Now, hold your breath for 4 counts,
4. Then, gently and slowly breathe in through your nose for 4 counts.
5. And then hold your breath again for 4 counts.
6. For a full session of box breathing, you simply repeat the cycle for a total of 4 times through.

# 3. Energetic Breathing

## Why it helps

This powerful breath technique was popularized by daredevil adventurer, "Iceman" Wim Hof. It energizes you by activating the sympathetic nervous system to produce adrenaline ([2020, Zwaag et. al.](#)). Emerging studies have shown that this technique allowed participants to increase anti-inflammatory mediators up to 200% higher, and lower pro-inflammatory ones by 50% ([2014, Kox et. al.](#)).

(Note: it also might make you feel a little lightheaded or tingly when you do it – which Hof says is normal.)

## How to do this

1. Sit comfortably and take 30 quick, deep breaths, like you're blowing up a balloon but in reverse – inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth.
2. Next, take a slow, deep breath in and then exhale, holding until you need to breathe in.
3. Inhale again, as deep as you can, and hold it for 10 seconds.
4. Repeat as many times as you like.



Wim Hof (Credit: Innerfire BV)

# Healthy Body Habits

A healthy body is a resilient body, which means you're better able to ward off the negative effects of stress. These daily habits focus on helping your body maintain proper function and recover.



## 4. Set a workout time

Get more consistent with daily exercise by setting a specific time of day to **just start**. This habit builds the discipline of working out at the same time. This can be 30 minutes of [HIIT](#) at 7pm, or [strength training](#) at 6:30am done at home!

## 5. Take a short walk

Studies show that being in nature has a calming effect. When it's possible, take a home walking session. Walking is a form of active recovery, helping to enhance blood flow and circulation. Try 5-10 minutes of [retro walking or walk a marathon](#) at home!

## 6. Add gentle movement

In addition to regular exercise, relaxing movement like tai chi, walking meditation, and [yoga](#) helps to combat stress. And has been shown to create new brain pathways from the training.

## 7. Unplug & unwind

Make time every day to be away from stimulating technology. Turn off your phone, power down your laptop, and go into another room and focus on winding down. You can set time limits on [iOS](#) & [Android](#), or use [Forest](#), [Stay Focusd](#), or [other apps](#).



### Ideas

cucumber  
blueberries  
grapefruit  
lemon  
+  
ginger  
mint  
rosemary  
basil

## 9. Replace substances

Avoid "numbing out" stress with alcohol, drugs, food or negative behaviors. Instead, try small steps to replace it with a healthier version.

For example, choosing diet soda instead of full-sugar - then sparkling water with fruit, plain sparkling water or tea, etc.

## 10. Get in your protein

Protein helps keep you full longer and provides the amino acids your muscles need to repair itself. By focusing on quality protein foods, you can keep blood sugar levels more stable. (Like the meals in [Ari Coach!](#))

## 11. Create a sleep routine

Getting a good 7 to 8 hours of sleep each night helps your body recover and restore for the coming day. Lack of sleep interferes with brain functions. Set a routine to train your body when to wind down.

## 12. Commit to less

Being productive all the time leads to burnout - both physically & mentally. Keep your health a priority by saying NO to adding more on your plate or asking for help.



### Ideas

brush teeth  
aromatherapy  
lay out clothes  
wash face  
meditate  
journal  
stretch



# Mindset Habits

Over time, stress can become such a habit that it starts to feel normal. How do you know if stress has become a way of life?

## 13. Tune into your body for a few minutes each day

- Listen to the voice in your head and be aware of what it's telling you. Is it repeating stressful thoughts or phrases throughout the day? That's one big clue.
  - You often feel full of dread, sadness, or anger, and wonder why no one else is getting with the (your) program.
- If these sound familiar, it's time to start making some mindset shifts.
- Every once in a while, do a quick body scan: is your jaw clenched? Your shoulders tight? Are you holding your breath?

## 14. Practice positivity

Negative thinking & emotions can create chronic stress. Set a regular “positivity” practice: read uplifting books, pray, meditate, or watch inspirational videos on a daily basis.

## 15. Focus on fun

Making time for hobbies & interests helps to relax you (unless the hobby triggers more stress). You'll come away feeling recharged and ready to tackle nagging problems. Start small by setting aside 5 minutes to do something fun!



## 16. Connect with friends & family

Seek out social support. Spend enough time with those you enjoy. At Ari Coach, we video chat weekly with family, hold online watch parties, and play virtual DnD.

## 17. Tune out

Music is known to influence mood & emotions. Stream some chill music or an inspirational podcast to give you a mental "time out" when dealing with road rage or other stressful events.

## 18. Design your space

Surround yourself with things that lift you up. That could be removing things that no longer serve a purpose or bring you joy - such as clutter or old clothing. Or rearranging things to help streamline your workflow.

## 19. Let go of control

Keep a positive attitude – but also accept that there are things beyond your control. Write down your worries and sort them into things you can do something about, and things out of your control.

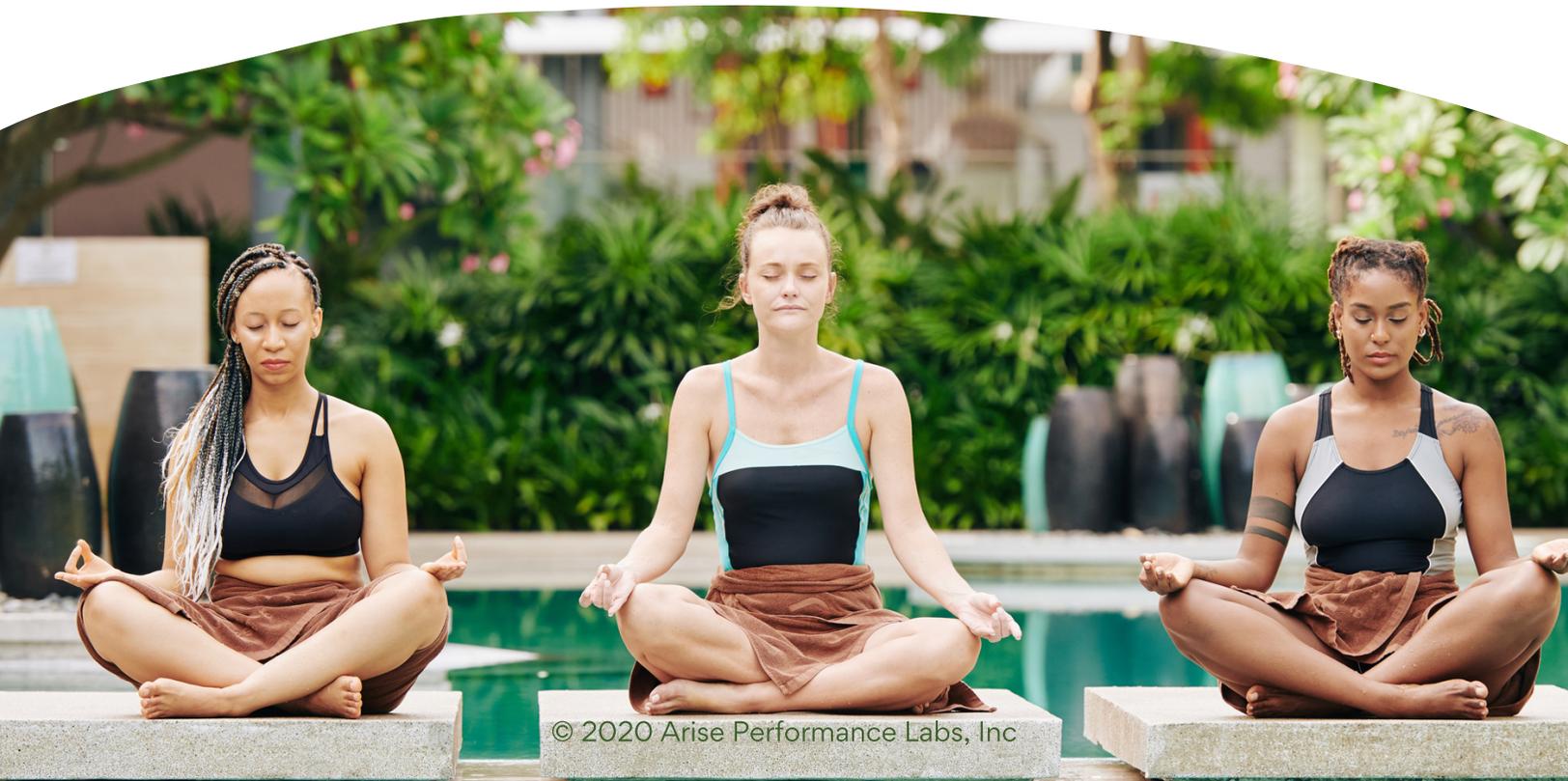
## 20. Watch cute animal videos (we're serious)

In a study by the University of Leeds, watching just 30 minutes of cute critters lowered measurable blood pressure, heart rate and anxiety in participants.

## 21. Set boundaries

Taking care of yourself means taking care of the things that are in your own best interest. By setting clear boundaries – both for yourself and others – you make time for the people & activities you love.

# Start small, with one habit at a time.



# Immunity-Boosting Checklist

## CDC Tips to Practice

- 22. Train yourself not to touch your eyes, nose, and mouth. This is a toughie, but it's a habit that will serve you the rest of your life, helping you avoid Coronavirus, colds, flu, and other viruses!
- 23. Wash your hands often with soap and water for at LEAST 20 seconds. If you don't have soap or water available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- 24. Avoid touching common public surfaces that other people touch – like door panels, doorknobs, etc.
- 25. Clean and frequently disinfect surfaces and objects (like your cell phone!) that are frequently touched. You can use a regular household cleaner or wipe for this.
- 26. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- 27. If you are sick, stay home.
- 28. If you cough or sneeze, cover your mouth and a nose with a tissue, and then throw the tissue directly in the trash.

## Immunity Foods

- 29. Ginger.** Add a slice to hot tea or infuse into water. Use fresh or powdered ginger in stir-fries with lean proteins, veggies, and curries.
- 30. Blueberries.** Uses these antioxidants-rich fruit in pancakes, smoothies, infused in water or eat them as a snack.
- 31. Tomatoes.** Packed with vitamin C, eat these in sandwiches/wraps, sauces for pasta/curries/chilis. Canned tomatoes have less Vit C, but are higher in calcium & iron.
- 32. Turmeric.** The curcumin in this spice activates the production of T-cells. Make golden milk lattes, add to rice cooked in broth, or creamy pasta.
- 33. Broccoli.** The sulforaphane in this common veggie helps activate enzymes in immune cells. Steam these up, stir-fry, roast and toss with grain bowls, salads, or mix into mac'n'cheese.

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# Stress less with Ari Coach

#1 mindful meal planner

We know what it's like to juggle a lot on your plate, especially with fitness goals. The last thing you need is to spend time logging calories and every bite you eat.

Ari Coach app helps you build healthy eating habits into a lifestyle.

**Try for free!**



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