



STRESS MANAGEMENT TOOLS

The AM/PM Tune-up

Here's a 10-minute sequence of exercises that can help you rev up in the morning as well as unwind in the evening.



Start with a short meditation.

Sitting with eyes closed, repeat to yourself a phrase that's meaningful to you. This can be self-talk along the lines of "I'm a valuable and productive person just the way I am." Or choose an inspirational passage from a favorite book or scripture.



Take a few deep breaths.

Standing with legs slightly apart, place your hands on your stomach with your elbows out. Inhale slowly to a count of five and hold each breath for a count of three, then exhale to a count of five. Feel the tension go out with the breath and imagine a warm light entering your body with each breath. Repeat three times.



Now do these stretches.

While doing them keep your shoulders back and relaxed, your buttocks slightly tucked and your center of gravity just behind your navel. Repeat each exercise three times.

- Still standing, clasp your hands behind your back and raise your hands, keeping your arms straight and your elbows relaxed, until you feel a comfortable stretch in your shoulders and upper arms. Hold for 10 seconds and relax.



- Stand with your feet shoulder-width apart and your hands against a wall a few feet away. Being sure to keep your back flat—not arched or swayed—bend at your hip joints until you feel a comfortable stretch in the back of your thighs. Hold for 10 seconds and relax.

- In the same spot, lean toward the wall, bending your arms until you feel a stretch in your calves. Hold for 10 seconds and relax.



- Lying on your back with one leg bent, grasp the other leg behind the knee and bring it to your chest. Holding the back of your thigh, gently pull your leg toward your head until you feel a stretch through your lower back and buttocks. Repeat on the other side.



- Repeat the previous stretch, but this time straighten the leg you're holding until you feel a stretch in the back of your thigh.



- Still lying on your back with feet flat and both legs bent, cross your arms across your chest. Slowly curl upward, bringing your shoulders off the floor. Don't allow your lower back to arch up. Sit up, exhaling slowly through a count of five on the way up and five more on the way back to the floor.