It's Stress Awareness Month: Find ways to unwind that benefit your heart and your mind!

Did you know there's a known link between stress levels and your risk of developing heart disease or suffering a stroke?[1] While stress is completely natural, it's important we know how to reduce stress and unwind to protect our hearts and our minds.

Here are a few great stress-relieving options you can start practicing today:

Take a deep breath of fresh air: Next time you rush out the door, try to take a moment to stop and take a deep breath. You'll instantly feel better and calmer. And, a deep breath has been shown to lower bp.[2]

Green thumb? If not, it's never too late to try! Gardening is a great activity to lower BP and enjoy the beauty that you are creating.

Walk and Nap: Take a 15 minute brisk walk followed by a nap. This combination has been shown to **improve memory** when done together vs. doing each activity alone.[3] It's a great option when feeling stressed since stress can impair our memory.[4]

Picnic in the backyard: Get rays of sunshine and bring a good book or music while you enjoy lunch. When exposed to the sun, your body produces Vitamin D which can lower BP![5]

Have a good laugh: This weekend, sit down to **watch a good comedy.** Laughter increases the oxygen level throughout your body and helps relieve tension by relaxing your muscles![2]

Listen to music you enjoy: Listening to **music** can help you **feel better** and manage stress more effectively. Plus, a **great tip from a Hello Heart user:** *Listening to my favorite song helps me relax while checking my blood pressure.*

Slow down and take moments to prioritize you: Planning ahead and allowing enough time to get the most important things done without having to rush can relieve everyday stressors. Plus, it can give you more moments in the day to reflect and accomplish things you actually want to do.

[1] https://azheartfoundation.org/stress-awareness-month/ [2] https://www.beaumont.org/health-wellness/blog/10-ways-to-de-stress-during-stressful-times

[3] https://academic.oup.com/sleep/article-abstract/doi/10.1093/sleep/zsaa062/5814272?redirectedFrom=fulltext [4] https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/protect-your-brain-from-stress

[5] https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2012/04/120425094310.htm https://www.stress.org/stress-awareness-month-april-2020