

Writing – Persuasive Essay

ASSIGNMENT:

Write a persuasive essay on what you believe are the three best stress relievers for students using evidence from the provided sources to prove your point.

PROCESS:

1. Read source and identify the three best stress relievers
2. Write a Thesis Statement
 - a. An effective thesis statement must meet three criteria:
 - i. It must introduce the topic of your paper
 - ii. It must take a debatable stance (state something that you will prove).
 - iii. It must be powerfully worded
3. Find Textual Evidence to support your Thesis Statement
4. Write the essay
 - a. Suggested Organization:
 - i. Introduction
 - ii. Stress Relief #1 + data + warrant
 - iii. Stress Relief #2 + data + warrant
 - iv. Stress Relief #3 + data + warrant
 - v. Conclusion

Remember:

- Use in-text citations to cite your evidence.
 - E.g.: According to “Relaxation Techniques for Stress,” the best way to relieve stress is to...
 - E.g.: One of the best stress relievers is meditation which “involves focusing your attention to help you feel more relaxed” (“Relaxation”).

“Relaxation Techniques for Stress: MedlinePlus Medical Encyclopedia.” *MedlinePlus*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, medlineplus.gov/ency/patientinstructions/000874.htm.

Relaxation Techniques for Stress

Chronic stress can be bad for your body and mind. It can put you at risk for health problems such as high blood pressure, stomachaches, headaches, anxiety, and depression. Using relaxation techniques can help you feel calm. These exercises can also help you manage stress and ease the effects of stress on your body.

How Relaxation Helps

When you feel stress, your body responds by releasing hormones that increase your blood pressure and raise your heart rate. This is called the stress response.

Relaxation techniques can help your body relax and lower your blood pressure and heart rate. This is called a relaxation response. There are several exercises you can try. See which ones work best for you.

Deep Breathing

One of the simplest ways to relax is by practicing deep breathing. You can do deep breathing almost anywhere.

- Sit still or lie down and place one hand on your stomach. Put your other hand over your heart.
- Inhale slowly until you feel your stomach rise.
- Hold your breath for a moment.
- Exhale slowly, feeling your stomach fall.

There are also many other types of breathing techniques you can learn. In many cases, you do not need much instruction to do them on your own.

Meditation

Meditation involves focusing your attention to help you feel more relaxed. Practicing meditation may help you react in a calmer way to your emotions and thoughts, including those that cause stress. Meditation has been practiced for thousands of years, and there are several different styles.

Most types of meditation usually include:

- **Focused attention.** You might focus on your breath, an object, or a set of words.
- **Quiet.** Most meditation is done in a quiet area to limit distractions.
- **Body position.** Most people think meditation is done while sitting, but it can also be done lying down, walking, or standing.
- **An open attitude.** This means that you stay open to thoughts that come into your mind during meditation. Instead of judging these thoughts, you let them go by bringing your attention back to your focus.
- **Relaxed breathing.** During meditation, you breathe slowly and calmly. This also helps you relax.

Biofeedback

Biofeedback teaches you how to control some of your body's functions, such as your heart rate or certain muscles.

In a typical session, a biofeedback therapist attaches sensors to different areas of your body. These sensors measure your skin temperature, brain waves, breathing, and muscle activity. You can see these readings on a monitor. Then you practice changing your thoughts, behaviors, or emotions to help control your body's responses. Over time, you can learn to change them without using the monitor.

Progressive Relaxation

This is another simple technique that you can do almost anywhere. Starting with your toes and feet, focus on tightening your muscles for a few moments and then releasing them. Continue with this process, working your way up your body, focusing on one group of muscles at a time.

Yoga

Yoga is an ancient practice rooted in Indian philosophy. The practice of yoga combines postures or movements with focused breathing and meditation. The postures are meant to increase strength and flexibility. Postures range from simple poses lying on the floor to more complex poses that may require years of practice. You can modify most yoga postures based on your own ability.

There are many different styles of yoga that range from slow to vigorous. If you are thinking about starting yoga, look for a teacher who can help you practice safely. Make sure to tell your teacher about any injuries.

Tai Chi

Tai chi was first practiced in ancient China for self-defense. Today, it is used mainly to improve health. It is a low-impact, gentle type of exercise that is safe for people of all ages.

There are many styles of tai chi, but all involve the same basic principles:

- **Slow, relaxed movements.** The movements in tai chi are slow, but your body is always moving.
- **Careful postures.** You hold specific postures as you move your body.
- **Concentration.** You are encouraged to put aside distracting thoughts while you practice.
- **Focused breathing.** During tai chi, your breathing should be relaxed and deep.

If you are interested in tai chi for stress relief, you may want to start with a class. For many people, it is the easiest way to learn the proper movements. You can also find books and videos about tai chi.

American Psychological Association. "How to help children and teens manage their stress." www.apa.org/topics/child-development/stress.

How to Help Children and Teens Manage Their Stress

In the short term, stress can push a child to practice for her piano recital or inspire a teen to study when he'd rather be out with friends. But chronic stress is different.

Left unchecked, long-term stress can contribute to a long list of physical and mental health problems. Prolonged stress can cause high blood pressure, weaken the immune system and contribute to diseases such as obesity and heart disease. It can also lead to mental health problems such as anxiety and depression—disorders that are becoming more common in youth. In a 2018 study, researchers analyzed data from the National Survey of Mental Health and found that rates of anxiety and depression had increased in kids ages 6 to 17, from 5.4% in 2003 to 8.4% in 2011-12.

Stress in young people doesn't always look like stress in adults. But like adults, children and teens can find healthy ways to cope. Together, young people and their parents can learn to spot the signs of excess stress and, with the right tools, manage it.

Sources of stress in young children

For young children, tension at home is a common source of stress. Children may be troubled by family discord or divorce, for example. Big life changes, such as a new stepparent or new home, can also be hard on a child. That's true even when the changes are happy ones, such as the arrival of a new sibling.

School is another frequent source of concern for kids. Young children might be stressed about making friends, dealing with bullies or getting along with their teachers. They might also be anxious about tests and grades.

Sources of stress in adolescents and teens

As children get older, their sources of stress expand. Teens are more likely than young children to be stressed by events or situations outside the home.

But as it is for younger kids, school remains a top stressor. A 2013 survey by APA found that stress was extremely common among teenagers: 83% of the teens surveyed said school was a significant or somewhat significant source of stress. But academics aren't the only thing worrying today's youth. A 2018 APA survey found that young people ages 15 to 21 — Generation Z — report significant stress around social issues in the news, including gun violence and school shootings, rising suicide rates, climate change, treatment of immigrants and sexual harassment.

Peers can help buffer stress, but can also be a source of it. Social relationships are especially important in adolescence. Many teens worry about fitting in, their first romantic relationships and peer pressure around substance use and sex.

Recognize the signs of stress

Signs of stress in youth can show up in a number of ways:

- **Irritability and anger:** Children don't always have the words to describe how they are feeling and sometimes tension bubbles over into a bad mood. Stressed-out kids and teens might be more short-tempered or argumentative than normal.
- **Changes in behavior:** A young child who used to be a great listener is suddenly acting out. A once-active teen now doesn't want to leave the house. Sudden changes can be a sign that stress levels are high.
- **Trouble sleeping:** A child or teen might complain of feeling tired all the time, sleep more than usual or have trouble falling asleep at night.
- **Neglecting responsibilities:** If an adolescent suddenly drops the ball on homework, forgets obligations or starts procrastinating more than usual, stress might be a factor.
- **Eating changes:** Eating too much or too little can both be reactions to stress.
- **Getting sick more often:** Stress often shows up as physical symptoms. Children who feel stress often report headaches or stomachaches, and might make frequent trips to the school nurse's office.

Stress management for kids and teens

Facing stressors is a fact of life, for children and adults. These strategies can help keep stress in check:

- **Sleep well.** Sleep is essential for physical and emotional well-being. Experts recommend nine to 12 hours of sleep a night for 6- to 12-year olds. Teens need eight to 10 hours a night. Sleep needs to be a priority to keep stress in check. To protect shut-eye, limit screen use at night and avoid keeping digital devices in the bedroom.
- **Exercise.** Physical activity is an essential stress reliever for people of all ages. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends at least 60 minutes a day of activity for children ages 6 to 17.
- **Talk it out.** Talking about stressful situations with a trusted adult can help kids and teens put things in perspective and find solutions.
- **Make time for fun — and quiet.** Just like adults, kids and teens need time to do what brings them joy, whether that's unstructured time to play with building bricks or uninterrupted hours to practice music or art. Also, while some children thrive bouncing from one activity to the next, others need more down time. Find a healthy balance between favorite activities and free time.
- **Get outside.** Spending time in nature is an effective way to relieve stress and improve overall well-being. Researchers have found that people who live in areas with more green space have less depression, anxiety and stress.
- **Write about it.** Research has found that expressing oneself in writing can help reduce mental distress and improve well-being. Some research has found, for

example, that writing about positive feelings—such as the things you're grateful for or proud of — can ease symptoms of anxiety and depression.

- **Learn mindfulness.** In a study of a five-week mindfulness training program for 13- to 18-year-olds, researchers found that teens who learned mindfulness experienced significantly less mental distress than teens who did not.