

Deep Relaxation: How to Be a Healthy y Calmada Super Mujer

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When we are stressed out, and especially when we have been stressed or worried for a long time, it is important to take care of ourselves and learn ways to cope so the stress doesn't turn into a health problem. If you read [Stress and Cortisol](#), you now know that there is scientific evidence that the long term effects of cortisol can cause health problems, not to mention las lonjitas (those pesky rolls around the middle). It turns out that getting thick around our middles, developing the lonjita syndrome, is not just a cosmetic problem. There is a link between lonjitas and developing chronic conditions like obesity, prediabetes, diabetes, heart disease and high blood pressure.

At De Las Mías we are doing additional research on the negative effects of chronic stress, and as time goes by we will provide you with updated information, tips and techniques on how to counter the negative effects of chronic stress, or as scientists are beginning to call it, Toxic Stress.

One of the most effective tools to counter Toxic Stress is deep relaxation. Deep relaxation has

been around for centuries. Your abuelita probably practiced deep relaxation without knowing it when she prayed the rosary every night before she fell asleep. Praying the rosary has been a Latina ritual for centuries, and now we are starting to find out, that besides feeling closer to the Blessed Mother, Latinas were finding a way, through repetitive prayer, to “letigo.” Letting go is one of the healthiest things you can do if you are under a lot of stress, and there are many ways to do this. Praying the rosary is just one of them.

As our country becomes more culturally diverse, we see men holding prayer beads, and others wearing mala beads around their wrists. In Greece they have worry beads. My friend Julie has some purple amethyst beads to die for! I have an old strand of mala beads that I wear around my left wrist when I am particularly stressed out. For me, they remind me to take deep breaths throughout the day and stop and smell the roses. I also use them to repeat the serenity prayer or if I’m in really dire straits, a bunch of Hail Marys.

Basically, repetitive prayer, like the Hail Mary, the recitation of a mantra, or the Serenity Prayer, helps place you in a relaxed, meditative state. This meditative state is deep relaxation and it helps counter the negative effects of stress.

Some of us nerviosas, can’t-sit-still types, do the [walking meditation](#) technique that we shared a few weeks ago. I have comadres who get a similar benefit from knitting. There are several studies that link knitting to positive health effects, better memory and deep relaxation.

Find your own way of getting into a deep relaxed state at least once a day. There are many good free apps that you can download that will help you meditate, but remember, the goal is the same. Deep relaxation. ¡Namaste, Comadres!

Here is a tried and true technique that I learned many years ago when I worked in a pain management program at the University of Arizona, Southwest Arthritis Center.

1. Find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed for at least 15 minutes.
2. Sit in a chair in a comfortable position, or on the floor with your back against the wall.
3. Take a deep breath. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Close your eyes and breathe slow deep breaths.
4. Repeat. Take at least 5 deep breaths and feel your body relax.
5. Let go of the tension in your body.
6. Pay attention to where you feel tense, and go there with your mind and just breathe into it.
7. Now start at your feet and pay attention to how they feel. Relax your feet. Breathe into your feet in your mind’s eye and relax the muscles.
8. Now go to your calves, breathe, relax, let go of tension in your calves.
9. Now move up, taking slow deep breaths to your thighs. Relax.
10. Up to your hips, your waist and chest. Take nice slow breaths and relax.
11. Keep going up to your neck and move it slightly back and forth in a slow motion until you feel the muscles in your neck relax. Keep up your slow deep breaths.
12. Now up to your face, your mouth, your jaw, your nose, eyes and whole head. Tell yourself to let go of all the tension in your body.
13. Now go back to your back and try to relax your muscles in your back, your buttocks and

down the back of your legs, all the way back to your feet.

14. Take a few more deep breaths.

15. Stay in this relaxed position for a few more minutes. When you are ready, open your eyes.

16. Now, slowly get up and go about your day.

There are other ways to go into a deep relaxed state. The Sanctuary Visualization technique is one we shared with you previously in [The Vision Map](#). There are many Creative Visualization techniques that are fun, whimsical and relaxing, but this simple technique is a good place to start.

Do you practice a deep relaxation technique? What works best for you? Share your wisdom with us, Comadres!

I wish you Paz, Comadres. ¡Buena, Suerte!

Sources:

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