



## A busy teacher's guide – to chillin'

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At a conference recently, at the end of a “Positive Psychology in Teaching” workshop, a public school teacher said, “Teachers are so busy. What can we do to deal with the stress?” I tried to share some things I do but, afterwards, it occurred to me that a “menu” of easy-to-do, effective techniques might be more helpful.

All of these ideas are useful. Perhaps the most important thing is to get in some healthy habits of slowing down and dealing with stress. I encourage you to choose two or three of these ideas – *and stay with them!* Decide you will do them regularly for at least three or four weeks. After that, decide if they are working for you and you'll keep doing them, or if you want to try other ideas. **The important thing is to find a method of dealing with stress and using it.**

- **Move! Exercise.** Humans are meant to walk 10-20 kilometers a day. Almost none of us do. And that means the body isn't getting the movement and blood flow we need. Exercise for 30 minutes at least 3 times a week. That doesn't mean you have to join a gym (though, if you do, that's great). Just get in the habit of moving/exercising. (Did you know that exercise can be as effective in dealing with depression as psychotropic drugs? The drug companies don't tell you that!)
- **Walk.** Find a few times a week you can walk for a half-hour or more. And stick to it.
- **Walk stairs** instead of using the elevator. (Yeah, I don't really like this one either, but I do it.) Walking up at least 20 flights of steps a week (that really isn't many) can significantly reduce your chance of stroke. And you *will* feel better.
- **Take a walk.** At lunch time, take a walk for 10 minutes or so. If you can do this outside, all the better. Maybe do it with a friend, and don't talk about the stressful things at work.
- **Try yoga.** There are so many poses and routines you can try. Search [youtube.com](http://youtube.com) to get started. There are many yoga practice videos on youtube. Here's a quick introduction. If you like it, you can keep going by clicking on other videos when it finishes. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B\\_S4JEPgzkU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_S4JEPgzkU)

- **Yoga breathing.** This is a great one to relax yourself quickly. Breathe out through your mouth for the count of about six. Then in through your nose for the count of four. (Out through the mouth/in through the nose because your mouth is bigger. So you get rid of more old air.) Once you are used to it, add a “hold your breath for the count of five” between the exhaling/inhaling steps. The actual count numbers aren’t important – the ratio. Don’t be surprised if you feel a bit dizzy the first few times you do this. You’ll get used to it. By the way, consider teaching this to your students to use before big tests, job interviews, etc. They can do it “privately, in public”.

- **Walking yoga.** Walk, breathing as in “yoga breathing”, taking a step for each count. This is actually a kind of meditation

- **Meditation.** It is effective and the physical and mental benefits are great. There are many types so I’m sure you can find one that you like. Here’s a good one to start with: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sz7cpV7ERsM>

It only takes about 14 minutes a day. This is the type I teach to my students because it is so easy to do and many people notice results right away. The meditation/yoga page of my website is at <http://www.eltandhappiness.com/meditation.html>

- **Reset your email.** You really don’t need to get and respond to every message right away. It wastes your time and increases your stress. For most people 2-4 times during a workday is enough.

- **Turn off your phone.** When you are talking to friends or family, turn off your phone or other devices. They are more important than any message you might be getting. You are, too.

- If you have long meetings, commutes, get caught in traffic jams, etc. **do airline exercises** (stretches where you don’t have to move a lot). One page that shows several is <http://www.brit.co/airplane-exercises/>

- **Avoid toxic people.** None of us can completely avoid people who constantly complain, but avoid them to the degree you can. And remember, you are not responsible for their feelings. Also, try to remember that they are dealing with some things that you don’t know anything about. Try to forgive them – even if they are jerks.

- Try **Random acts of kindness.** Do unexpected, nice things for people who don’t expect them. They’ll be happier but so will you. (How about that “toxic person” we just talked about?)

- Do the **Three good things happened today** exercise ([http://www.eltandhappiness.com/uploads/1/1/2/5/11251138/3\\_good\\_things\\_happened\\_today.pdf](http://www.eltandhappiness.com/uploads/1/1/2/5/11251138/3_good_things_happened_today.pdf)) or keep a **Happiness/Gratitude journal.** ([http://www.eltandhappiness.com/uploads/1/1/2/5/11251138/happiness\\_journal.pdf](http://www.eltandhappiness.com/uploads/1/1/2/5/11251138/happiness_journal.pdf)) This will help you notice/ savor good things in your life.

- **Touch nature.** Even if you live in a huge city, there is probably somewhere you can see, feel, experience. Go there. Slow down. Notice and enjoy it.