



Work Stress & High Blood Pressure

by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

Q: I work very hard in a stressful job, and I have developed high blood pressure. I seem to have completely forgotten the art of relaxation. Please, can you help me?

A: I surely will try. It sounds as though your work-related-stress has seeped into aspects of your personal life, where it does not belong. This frequently happens, particularly to people who are conscientious about their commitments and responsibilities. It seems you are literally *"taking your responsibilities to heart,"* which is impacting your health and quality of life in adverse ways. Your question implies that you you're realizing you have a degree of influence here, a first step toward "remembering" the fine art of relaxation of which you speak.

Here are a few suggestions:

1. Begin by getting fully evaluated by a trusted physician who is knowledgeable about the many and varied factors that can influence blood pressure. It can take more than one try to find the right doctor. Be certain (s)he listens to you, and explains findings clearly. There are two reasons for this:
 - a. You must understand what is going on in your own body/mind.
 - b. Worrying about one's blood pressure does not do great things for one's blood pressure. You may well find that what they tell you will bring great relief.

2. Take a 2-3 minute mini-break every hour throughout your workday.

3. Commit to doing a minimum of one fun thing every single day, without exception.

A few to try:

- Call up an old friend.
- Take yourself to a laugh-out-loud movie, or a tearjerker. Crying can be a great release too.
- Get some moderate, pleasurable exercise every day.
- Watch a funny TV show. Tape them for future enjoyment.
- Organize a pile, a drawer or a closet. (This one is not much fun until you finish.)
- Buy two bunches of flowers. Keep one and give one away.
- Do something kind for someone else -- and don't tell a soul.
- Take a long, relaxing, non-working bath.
- Go out for a nice, healthy-but-really-delicious meal.
- Get hugged often.
- Dance like crazy all by yourself, or invite your kids to join in.
- Listen to music you love, or make some music of your own.
- Go someplace beautiful--take a drive, visit a museum a zoo or a garden.

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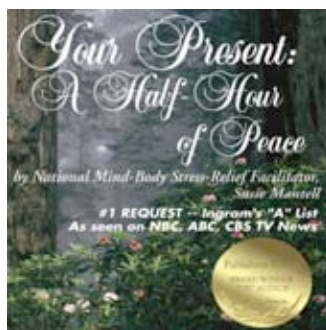
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4. Try ending your busy days by falling asleep to music you love or a soothing relaxation CD like my own, "Your Present: A Half-Hour of Peace," or others.
5. Many people find great relief from hectic days in acupuncture, massage or other body/energy work, in the buoyancy of swimming, and short-term counseling to explore the work-related stress and how to let the excess stuff go.
6. Remember: Life really is short. Do your job and care about doing it well. But first care for your health and well-being.

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