

- Exercise

Restore calm and relieve stress with these simple techniques

Derby Telegraph · 2 Mar 2021 · 22 · STRESS RELIEF THROUGH BREATHING

Katie says the parasympathetic nervous system, which can help restore calm when you're stressed, can be indirectly stimulated with the right breathing technique, calming the mind and heart rate, deeply oxygenating the blood and overriding emotional negativity.



“Breath is THE antidote to stress,” says Katie. “Done slowly and mindfully, deep breathing will also affect the nervous system to relieve stress and anxiety, by triggering the release of neurohormones which inhibit stress-producing hormones and result in relaxation.”

BOOST ENERGY WITH TAPPING

The ancient Chinese therapy of ‘Pai Sha’, or tapping with bamboo, can “work wonders” for general wellbeing, says Katie.

Because good circulation of qi and blood is a health fundamental in Chinese medicine, she explains, when the flow is disrupted or stagnates – because of a sedentary lifestyle, stress, emotional upset or injury – it may lead to a variety of symptoms, including aches and pains, atrophy and weakness, low energy, skin issues, bad sleep, sluggish metabolism, lack of coordination and digestive issues. “Tapping the skin on a daily basis enables the free flow of this all-important circulation,” Katie explains.

“In as little as one minute a day, an all-over body tap can clear areas of stagnation, support lymphatic drainage, release tension and encourage a smooth flow of blood and qi around the body.”

SELF MASSAGE CAN IMPROVE SLEEP AND REDUCE INFLAMMATION

The ancient self-massage technique of ‘Gua Sha’ uses a round-edged tool to press/stroke the skin. It’s said to be beneficial for inflammation, muscular tension, sleep problems, coughs and fever, according to Katie, who says the technique improves microcirculation, helps release antioxidants and beneficial enzymes, and stimulates qi flow and lymphatic drainage.

“Gently encouraging the movement of lymphatic fluid, which can’t flow by itself, is great to reduce puffiness and congestion and help the body clear excess waste,” says Katie.

“You can do it anywhere and any time, either through your clothes or directly onto the skin, using oil as a lubricant.”

BOOST OVERALL HEALTH THROUGH GENTLE QIGONG MOVEMENTS

Qigong – which means ‘life force practice’ – involves slow, gentle, considered movements combined with breath and mental engagement.

Fans of Qigong often believe it can bring a host of general health and wellbeing benefits. The theory is that Qigong works the muscles and nourishes the organs but, crucially, doesn’t strain them – so it boosts oxygen uptake and circulation while the body is relaxed.

“By strengthening your life force on the inside, you’ll see the results on the outside,” says Katie.

“If you’re tired, lacking in energy, out of shape or simply not feeling great, Qigong is for you. As you do the exercises, you’re balancing the whole body. Just because it’s gentle, don’t underestimate its power and efficacy.”

■ **REMEMBER:** While complementary therapies and TCM may be something you wish to explore, always get any symptoms or health concerns checked by your GP.