tress soothers

JR EASY WAYS TO RELAX

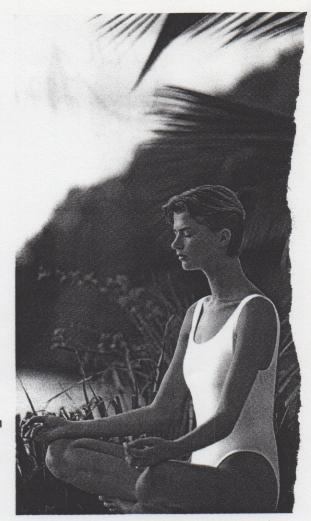
ith everything you have to think about these days—making a lifetime commitent, planning an entire wedding, meeting all of your soonbe relatives—you may be feeling a little stressed out. How relax? Try these coping strategies.

TERCISE One great way to relax is through yoga, a n of exercise that focuses on stretching and breathing. "Since we tight-our muscles when we're stressed, stretching is a great way get rid of tension—both physically and emotionally," examins Donna Davidge, a yoga trainer in N.Y.C. Proper eathing is also essential. "Most of us breathe too quickly d shallowly, which can make us more tense," she adds. hat's better? Inhale and exhale slowly and deeply through ur nose. Visualize your breath as it fills your lungs, flows o your abdomen, then travels throughout your body. actice throughout the day, until it becomes automatic.

studies show that stress reduces time spent in the pest, most restorative stages of sleep. And, being sleepy adds to stress by sing you feel irritable and depressed. How to stop tossing and ning? The Better Sleep Council offers this advice: • Keep are biological clock in sync by going to bed and rising at the ne time each day. • Reduce caffeine—have your last cup coffee six to eight hours before bedtime. • Clear your nd early in the evening by making lists; note things to do, well as anxieties or worries and possible solutions. Develop a nightly bedtime ritual (e.g., stretches, reading); it every night so it becomes a cue to wind down.

One way to destress is to meditate: Sit crosslegged (wrists on knees, index fingers meeting thumbs). Concentrate on the flow of your breath. Aim to meditate 15

minutes a day.



N.Y.C. and author of *The Female Stress Syndrome* (Newmarket Press, 1991). "To avoid misunderstandings, let him know what's wrong, then tell him *how* he can make you feel better," she advises. And don't shoulder all the burdens yourself. Together, make a list of wedding problems and decide how you can both solve them. "Agree to let go of any issues that are out of your control," she adds. It's also essential to continue doing all the things you enjoy together—candlelit dinners, movies, time with friends, says Dr. Witkin. "Otherwise, you'll forget why you're marrying each other."

destress is essential to both mental and physical health, says Dr. Witkin. One way to spend the time: Take a long, luxurious bath—warm water relaxes the mind as well as the muscles. To induce the deepest state of relaxation, Caswell-Massey bath experts offer these tips: Run a hot bath (105° F). Soak for at least 15 minutes (no longer than 30) to get the maximum benefits from the heat and avoid dehydration. When you get out of the tub, lather a scented body lotion on damp skin. Another way to indulge is to have a professional massage—it

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