

Introduction

Looking for a community service idea or B'nai Mitzvah Project? This is a short description of different methods to relieve stress that can be made into sessions to teach people about them! They can be shown to people through Hebrew School, preschool, or youth event activities. There's also the option of working with the local community by showing these types of activities at town fairs. There's plenty of ways to relieve stress in a fast paced society, and there's several more methods of relieving stress that I don't mention that can be found with a little research.

This guide was created for a Girl Scout Gold Award done at Temple Har Shalom. Feel free to reach out to me if you need any help!

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Stress

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes someone feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is the reaction of the body in response to a challenge or demand. Stress is most often referred to as a negative feeling, but there is such a thing as good stress—eustress. Distress is the more commonly referred to type of stress, and for good reason.

Unfortunately for many people, when confronted with distress, they don't know what to do about it. Sometimes they engage in harmful activities, under the impression that what they are doing will relieve stress in some way. Sometimes, people don't do anything to relieve stress, and wait for the feeling to subside. While this is definitely better than the unhealthy ways to relieve stress, doing nothing may not feel good. This leaves the only optimal strategy, relieving stress in *healthy ways!*

There are a myriad of different ways that can relieve stress and anxiety. Some examples, that will be explained in greater depth, are doing yoga, breathing, watching fish swim, pet therapy, and self indulgence! However, these are only just a fraction of all the varying methods that anyone can use to relieve stress. Plenty more can be found with only a bit of research, and equipped with that knowledge, people will be able to help calm themselves in the ways best suited to them.

Fish

Fish tanks are a common sight in most public places, such as at doctor's offices, restaurants, and nursing homes. Fish tanks have many attributes that contribute to its overall calming effect, that can be especially helpful to someone in distress.



First, are the fish itself. Most fish seen in a fish tank are fish that swim and move slowly. The effect of watching these fish swim will sooth stress and anxiety. The reason behind this is that this act of following the fish with your eyes is EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing), a type of therapy that focuses on alleviating negative feelings that result from traumatic experiences.

Next is the sound of water. It has been studied that many people are soothed by the sound of running water, like ocean waves, rainstorms, and running streams. The scientific reason to exactly *why* water is so relaxing still isn't known, but that doesn't stop people from enjoying the benefits. The sound of bubbles, and other noises associated with nature itself, all help people to unwind.

Pet Therapy

The idea of therapy with any type of animal in general dates all the way back to Ancient Greece, where they would use horses to lift the spirits of the severely ill. In the 1940's, farm animals were used to calm the minds of people who were suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder.

Any pet owner will say that living with a pet comes with many benefits, including constant companionship, love and affection. Not only are people happier in the presence of animals, they're also healthier. Majority of people have mental improvements from pet ownership. Millions of homes across the United States also house a pet, which can be used for relief from anxiety.

Studies have found a variety of different benefits that come from the presence of a pet in the home. In some cases, dogs were able to reduce levels of anxiety of people significantly in only a short amount of time, and pet-owners with high blood pressure were able to have lower pressure in stressful times when compared to people without pets. However, the benefits of pet

therapy extends beyond just mental benefits, but in forming friendships and social support networks. Pets provide a sense of security and routine that provided emotional and social support.

Breathing

There's a variety of different ways to breath with the intent to distress. I will be talking about Danjeon Breathing, a style created by wealthy and powerful Korean elites over two thousand years ago. The only thing ruling elites of Ancient Korea feared was illness, which propelled the methodical refinement of the most essential Danjeon Breathing exercises over the centuries, which was kept secret by the elites for centuries until after the Korean War.

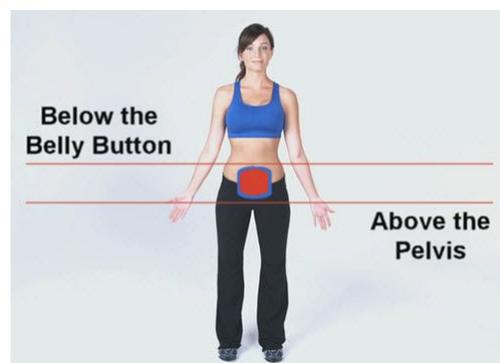
Today, Danjeon Breathing studios can be found in every neighborhood of South Korea. The nation's top business and political leaders routinely practice it each day. They do it for the three principal benefits of Danjeon breathing: Clarity, health and stamina. These benefits are achieved by enhancing the life force and oxygenation levels of the body.

At present, the number of poses available with these different styles is well in excess of 1,000. However, the practice of Danjeon Breathing was largely limited to less than 100 core wellness poses for the better part of its existence. It was these core wellness poses that made it possible for this self-healing energy art to endure for centuries.

Danjeon Breathing seems like it's just deep breathing in various poses, but there's more to it than that. What Danjeon Breathing has in common with other energy arts such as Yoga, Reiki and Tai Chi is the goal of oxygenating the body. This increase in the body's oxygenation levels not only makes you feel lighter and brighter after your exercise, it also bolsters your immune system. However, because of the singular focus of Danjeon Breathing, this art is more effective than the others.

In Korean, the term "Danjeon" refers to a region of the body immediately above the center of the pelvic cradle, near the base of the spine. The Danjeon is the location of where your "gut instinct" resides. Danjeon Breathing, as it is known today, is named for the part of the body.

The simplest way to explain the Danjeon Breathing method is that after centering your focus on your Danjeon, you inhale from your danjeon and visualize Life force energy entering through the top of your head and passing down through your body to



it. On exhale, you visualize yourself expelling the residual spent life force energies in your Danjeon out and down through your legs and then out through your feet.

One style in particular has a central pose that transcends all others: the Danjeon Breathing pose. The 56 other poses precede or follow this central pose and are used to open energy channels in the body to optimize the exercise results for specific symptoms and wellness needs.



Yoga

Yoga is the default thing that comes to mind when discussing stress-relieving activities. Some people may be hesitant to try out yoga, but yoga is something anyone can participate in! Through the combination of physical poses, controlled breathing, and meditation or relaxation, yoga can help to reduce stress, and even blood pressure and heart rate.

Yoga's quite a diverse field. There are many different styles, forms and intensities. How you pick up yoga is also just as varying, as you can join classes, learn from books, or through watching videos. But throughout all these differences, yoga has core elements: posing, breathing, and meditation or relaxation, and the benefits of improved flexibility, stress reduction, and management of chronic conditions.

Self Indulgence

Self Indulgence is pretty much a fancy way to say "treat yourself", or make yourself happy. This section will be vague, because not everybody enjoys the same things! Examples of what exactly you could do to enjoy yourself are listening to your favorite music, eating your favorite foods, spending time with pets, watching your favorite TV shows or movies, find things that make you laugh, or just other things in general that make you happy!