



The Living Is Easy

Why not use those extra hours of light to ease up?

An unfortunate constant in our lives, stress is a factor in a wide range of diseases. Luckily, reducing stress, which is crucial to good health, is easy. And summertime provides great opportunities for just such work.

Look to the sun for a big boost. The sun helps release serotonin, a neurotransmitter that has a calming effect. "It's feel-good chemistry," says Debbie Mandel, stress expert and author of *Changing Habits: The Caregivers' Total Workout*. The sun also provides us with ample amounts of much-needed vitamin D.

Positive summer activities beckon, such as swimming,

tennis, and golf. Even walking 20 minutes after work is great for body and spirit. Adding music helps even more. "If you work out, you're burning off stress hormones and releasing endorphins, which are mood lifters. And if you're listening to good music on your headphones, you create a synergistic effect to relieve more stress," said Mandel.

Mandel is also a proponent of the summer mini-vacation. "That's very important for workaholics like me," she said, "because some of us don't feel comfortable taking a big block of time. But those four-day weekends can really reset our creative levels."

Kathleen Hall, founder of the Stress Institute and author of *A Life in Balance: Nourishing the Four Roots of True Happiness*, created the S.E.L.F. care plan for stress reduction. S is for serenity. She suggests memorizing a short phrase for a quick daily

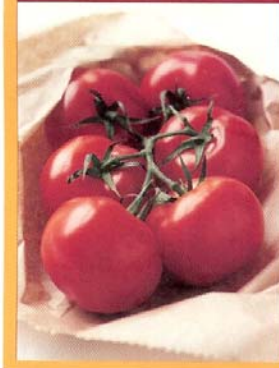
meditation to promote calmness. E is for exercise. L is for love. Many studies show that strong friendships add to longevity. And F is for food.

The S.E.L.F. care plan for stress reduction. S is for serenity. E is for exercise. L is for love. F is for food.

"Food changes your mood," Hall says. "It's nourishment for all five senses." Even though everyone knows how important breakfast is—it brings your metabolism back up from sleep—it's a special treat in summer, with all that great fruit to choose from. "We collected research on octogenarians all over the world," says Hall. "One common denominator: no matter what they ate, they all ate breakfast." So no skipping!

Ripe, Red, and Ready-to-Eat!

You may have heard about the importance of the phytochemical lycopene—the red pigment that gives fruits like tomatoes and watermelon their hue. Research has linked lycopene to a reduced incidence of prostate cancer. New studies show that the lycopene in tomato juice may also reduce the effects of emphysema. Further study is necessary, but in the meantime, enjoy some fresh gazpacho made from juicy red tomatoes, or a big slice of watermelon—those summer fruits have never looked more appealing!



>>> CLEAN IT, COOL IT, COOK IT

Don't let the sun blind you to the importance of safe food preparation, even at an outdoor party. A 1997 FDA survey showed that more than a quarter of Americans don't wash cutting boards after prepping raw meat, and almost a quarter of us eat undercooked hamburger. Always wash hands before touching food, and wash hands, utensils, and boards after working with raw meat. Don't let raw food touch cooked ones. Keep refrigerated items in the cooler if you're not using or eating them. Use a meat thermometer to make sure cooked meat is 160°F, and chicken 180°F.