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Trade darkness for light! As soon as stress and communication expert Doe Lang, Ph.D., president of Charismedia Services, a consulting company, feels signs of tension, she performs a unique little exercise. "Just cover your right nostril with your right thumb and exhale through the left nostril, imagining yourself breathing out a long black cloud of stress," she instructs. Then breathe in through the same nostril and imagine pure golden light flowing right into your brain. Repeat the process for one minute. As you do, you'll be trading stressful thoughts for positive ones, she says. And since the left nostril is connected to the right brain (the side that governs emotions) you'll be bringing more oxygen—a proven stress-buster—to that side.

The right color can calm you instantly!

Color yourself relaxed! In studying people's responses to color, researchers have discovered that just gazing at the color orange instantly reduces tension and boosts cheerfulness, says Debbie Mandel, author of *Turn on Your*

Inner Light. No one knows for sure why, "but we think it has to do with the fact that orange combines the best properties of red, a proven energizer, and yellow, which studies show boosts mental clarity," she explains. In fact, Mandel often keeps an orange—"for de-stressing, not eating"—on the console while doing the weekly radio show she hosts!

Come to your senses! Even a Zen teacher who specializes in stress-busting sometimes gets tense, says Cheri Huber, author of *Suffering is Optional*. "But the minute I catch myself getting stressed, I stop and take a few seconds to notice my surroundings. I listen to the noises around me, breathe in the scents, feel the clothes on my skin and notice any taste in my mouth." Why does this work? "Stress is like a bad story in your mind," she says—but by shifting your attention from churning thoughts of what could go wrong to what's actually happening in the moment, you interrupt the story, giving yourself an instant, soothing reality check.

—Barbara Hustedt Crook

Easy trick: let stress make you calmer!

Jonelle Barlow, Ph.D., author of *The Stress Manager*, reports that nothing bothers her much since she started using this trick, based on the idea that any behavior you repeat often enough will become a habit, or "conditioned response." To try it: pick something that makes you tense, like

long supermarket lines. Then, whenever you have to deal with it, take a deep breath and tell yourself, "I am relaxed." Before long, your mind will be conditioned to link the stressful situation with relaxation—and the problem that used to drive you crazy will seem like no big deal!