

## Wellness in 10: Creative Ways to Reduce Stress

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April is Stress Awareness Month and Counseling Awareness Month, brought to us by the American Counseling Association (ACA) at [www.counseling.org](http://www.counseling.org).

To celebrate this special month, *Wellness in 10* will feature creative ways to reduce stress. Some of these methods are the result of years of scientific research, and others you might try just for fun!

1. Paint, craft, or otherwise be artistic. According to the American Art Therapy Association being creative can help your brain to produce Serotonin which can help to reduce the feeling of stress.
2. Chew gum. According to a 2008 study (<http://www.medicalnewstoday.com/releases/119826.php>), chewing gum may help to reduce cortisol levels and alleviate stress.
3. Get your hug on. Hugs may help to reduce blood pressure, and stress in adults.
4. Breathe deeply. The simple act of slowing down and focusing on a simple process like breathing may help to reduce stress and anxiety
5. Get your heart rate up—in a good way! Exercise can cause an endorphin release that can dramatically reduce stress
6. Laugh. Not only can laughter help you to reduce stress, it can also help to increase your energy levels.
7. Get a massage. Massage can help with current stress and may help with the body's reaction to stress over all.
8. Play some tunes. Music can help us to relax, lower our blood pressure, and reduce stress.
9. Write, keep a journal...better yet, keep a gratitude journal. Writing and/or journaling has meditative effects that help our brains to slow down and process the world around us with more clarity. Take this practice one step further and spend a few minutes reflecting each day on what you are thankful for and how you are blessed. The practice may help you to reduce your stress!
10. Join Fido, or Furball, or Fluffy for some good animal-bonding time. There are many notable benefits to pet ownership, stress reduction is just one of those benefits.