

SELF CARE

How to Stay Healthy While Reducing Stress



Stress is the physiological and psychological response to situations the body and mind find to be overwhelming. We often ask ourselves how we should manage stress. You can manage how you live with these ten tips to feel less stressed:

- 1. Use guided meditation.** [Guided meditation](#) is a great way to distract yourself from the stress of day-to-day life. There are many guided meditations available on the internet that can help you find 5 minutes of centered relaxation.
- 2. Practice deep breathing.** [Deep breathing](#) is a great way to reduce the activation of your sympathetic nervous system, which controls the body's response to a perceived threat. Deep breaths taken in - to a count of five seconds, held for two seconds and released to a count of five seconds, can help activate your parasympathetic nervous system, which helps reduce the overall stress and anxiety you may be experiencing.
- 3. Maintain physical exercise and good nutrition.** [Physical exercise and nutrition](#) are two important components in how you respond to stress. When your body is healthy, your mind can be healthy and vice versa. Physical exercise is proven to be a great stress reliever and helps to improve your overall quality of life. Nutrition is important as stress can deplete certain vitamins, such as A, B complex, C and E. Maintaining proper nutrition not only helps your body feel better, but your mind as well, which allows you to better combat stress.

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4. Manage social media time. Spending time on social media sites can become stressful, not only by what we might see, but also because the time you are spending on social media might be best spent visiting with friends, being outside enjoying the weather, or reading a great book.

5. Eat Healthy. Eat and drink to optimize your health and reduce stress by drinking less alcohol and eating proper portion sizes. Caffeine can compound the effects of stress. Consuming a healthy, balanced diet can help to provide energy and disease-fighting nutrients. Make sure you are drinking enough water and eating plenty of fruit, vegetables, whole grains, lean meat, fish, poultry and low-fat dairy.

6. Stop using tobacco and nicotine products. People who use nicotine often refer to it as a stress reliever, however, nicotine places more stress on the body by increasing physical arousal and reducing blood flow and breathing.

7. Exercise regularly. In addition to having physical health benefits, exercise has been shown to be a powerful stress reliever. Consider non-competitive aerobic exercise, strengthening with weights, or movement activities like yoga or Tai Chi, and set reasonable goals for yourself. Aerobic exercise has been shown to release endorphins—natural substances that help you feel better and maintain a positive attitude.

8. Study and practice relaxation techniques. Taking the time to relax every day helps to protect the body from the effects of stress. Take small steps and choose from a variety of techniques, such as deep breathing, imagery, progressive muscle relaxation, and mindfulness meditation. There are many online and smart phone apps that provide guidance on these techniques; although some entail purchase costs, many are available free of charge.

9. Reduce triggers of stress. If you are like most people, your life may be filled with too many demands and too little time. For the most part, these demands are ones we have chosen. You can free up time by practicing time-management skills like asking for help when it's appropriate, setting priorities, pacing yourself, and reserving time to take care of yourself.



Healthy Recipe

Slow Cooker Ropa Vieja

Ropa Vieja is the Cuban national dish and it is a deliciously tender homey meal that will make your mouth water! Ropa Vieja means shredded cloths and it's a description of just how delicate the flank steak is after is cooked. A Must Try!

Ingredients

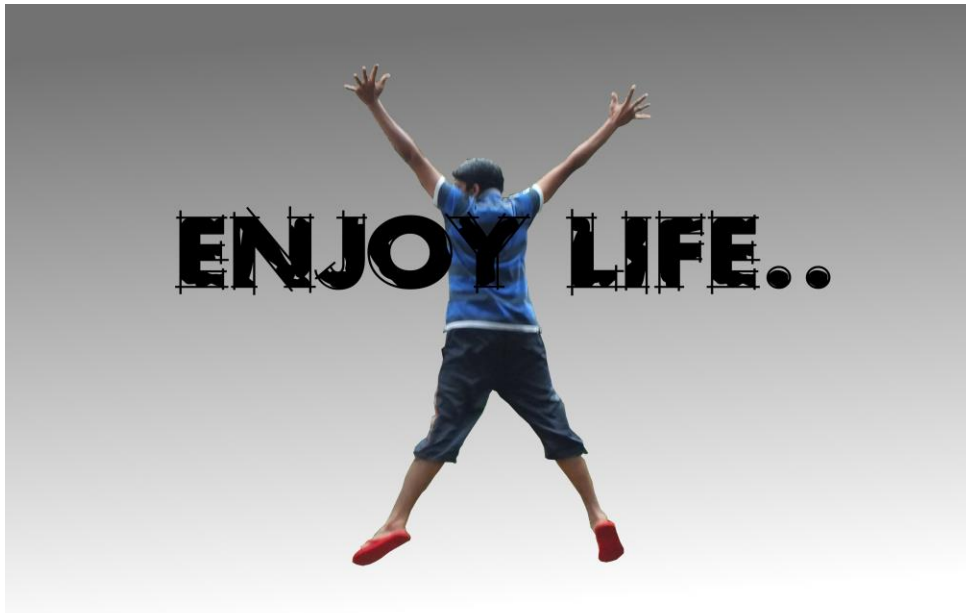
- 2 pounds flank steak
- 28 ounce can diced tomatoes
- ½ cup low sodium vegetable broth or water
- 1 medium red bell pepper
- 1 medium green bell pepper
- 1 medium onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 1 medium jalapeno
- ½ tsp. oregano
- ½ tsp. ground cumin
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 tbsp. capers
- ½ cups pitted green olives



Preparation Steps

1. Chop bell peppers, onion, garlic, and jalapeño.
2. Season the flank steak with salt and pepper. In a 4-quart slow cooker, combine with the diced tomatoes with the broth/water, bell peppers, onion, garlic, jalapeño, oregano, cumin and bay leaf. Add the flank steak, cover and cook on high for 5 hours, until the meat is very tender.
3. Transfer the meat to a cutting board and let rest for 10 minutes. Remove the bay leaf. Stir-in the olives, and capers into the sauce.
4. Using 2 forks, shred the meat. Return the meat to the sauce to warm through. Spoon the meat and sauce into bowls, garnish with cilantro and serve with steamed brown rice or warm whole-wheat tortillas.





More Resources...

[USDA MyPlate](#)

[Rutgers NJAES Food, Nutrition, and Health](#)

[Get Family & Community Health Sciences Healthy Recipe Videos](#)

[EatingWell.com](#) has lots of healthy recipes.

[Mayo Clinic Healthy Recipes](#)

[Keep Food Safe](#)

[The Core Four Practices of Food Safety | FightBAC](#)

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