# Refresh from Stress: 30-DAY INSPIRATION

**NOVEMBER 1–30, 2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
<th>WEDNESDAY</th>
<th>THURSDAY</th>
<th>FRIDAY</th>
<th>SATURDAY</th>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE BASICS: FUNDAMENTALS OF SELF CARE</strong></td>
<td><strong>1</strong> Create your self-care mission</td>
<td><strong>2</strong> Sleep at least 7 hours</td>
<td><strong>3</strong> Eat a healthy meal</td>
<td><strong>4</strong> Watch a Take 5 Stress Management Video</td>
<td><strong>5</strong> Increase physical activity: Move More</td>
<td><strong>6</strong> Silently reflect for 10 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MINDFUL ANYTHING MIND YOU</strong></td>
<td><strong>7</strong> Learn about mindfulness</td>
<td><strong>8</strong> Be mindful of nature</td>
<td><strong>9</strong> Check your mood</td>
<td><strong>10</strong> Be mindful while eating</td>
<td><strong>11</strong> Practice mindful self-acceptance</td>
<td><strong>12</strong> Unplug from technology</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL CONNECTION EMBRACE</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong> Ask about a cultural tradition</td>
<td><strong>15</strong> Enjoy break time with a coworker</td>
<td><strong>16</strong> Take a laughter break</td>
<td><strong>17</strong> Support others—take GASO pledge</td>
<td><strong>18</strong> Share your smile with others</td>
<td><strong>19</strong> Engage in a fun activity w/ family, pet or friend</td>
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<td><strong>GRATITUDE GREAT-FULL</strong></td>
<td><strong>21</strong> Compliment yourself</td>
<td><strong>22</strong> Compliment others</td>
<td><strong>23</strong> Capture team accomplishments</td>
<td><strong>24</strong> Write 3 things you are grateful for (share if you wish)</td>
<td><strong>25</strong> Learn benefits of gratitude</td>
<td><strong>26</strong> Write a “thank you” note</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RESILIENCE SUSTAIN</strong></td>
<td><strong>28</strong> Watch TED Talk: How to Make Stress Your Friend</td>
<td><strong>29</strong> Practice resilience</td>
<td><strong>30</strong> Create a plan to sustain emotional wellness</td>
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*Breathe, relax and have fun!*

*NOTE: BENEFITS ANNUAL ENROLLMENT ENDS NOVEMBER 7, 2016*
DAY 1: CREATE YOUR SELF-CARE MISSION

Take a 10-minute walk & reflect on what self-care means to you. Consider the reasons that you are participating in “Refresh from Stress.”

Are you hoping for increased self-awareness, confidence or calmness? More energy, motivation, resilience or gratitude? Improved work performance? Personal or professional relationships? Enhanced emotional or physical health? Better coping skills?

After your walk, write your thoughts in your new Refresh journal, so it becomes part of your “Self-care Mission.” Here’s one way to get started. “I’m choosing to ‘Refresh’ and take care of me because...”
DAY 2: SLEEP AT LEAST 7 HOURS

Practice 3 of the following healthy sleep habits:

- Set a bedtime that is early enough to get 7 hours of sleep
- Plan your eating with sleep in mind. Avoid eating a heavy meal less than 4 hours before bed and engage in light snacking only after dinner.
- Avoid consuming alcohol or caffeine within 6 hours of bedtime.
- Allow for a one-hour wind down period for relaxation and pre-bedtime rituals before bedtime.
- Limit exposure to light in the evenings and keep your bedroom at a cool and comfortable temperature.

Click below to see the benefits of good sleep hygiene.

9 Reasons to Sleep More

Return to Calendar
DAY 3: EAT A HEALTHY MEAL TODAY

Eating healthy is a journey shaped by many factors, including our stage of life, situations, preferences, access to food, culture, traditions, and the personal decisions we make over time. All your food and beverage choices count. Each meal is a building block in your healthy eating style. Make sure to include all the food groups throughout the day. (USDA ChooseMyPlate.Gov)

Good nutrition is a recipe for low stress and a healthy mood. Remember to practice the following:

- Watch the size of your food portions
- Make half your plate fruits and veggies
- Drink plenty of water throughout the day
- Choose fiber-rich whole grains

For more resource information:
ChooseMyPlate
10 Tips to build a healthy meal
Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics
DAY 4: STRESS MANAGEMENT EXERCISE: WATCH A “TAKE 5” VIDEO

Relieve stress by improving the relationship between your mind and body. View one of the FSAP’s “Take 5 for Wellness: Stress Management” videos. Try or practice one of these activities (i.e., mindful breathing, progressive muscle relaxation or stretching).

FSAP Take 5 for Wellness: Stress Management Videos
DAY 5: INCREASE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND MOVE MORE!

Participate in at least 10 more minutes of physical activity today than originally planned. Use the stairs, park further away, or turn up the music and dance!

Get more steps if you are participating in the Move More Challenge!
DAY 6: SILENT REFLECTION OR INSPIRATION

Take 10 minutes for an inspirational or spiritual reflection. Think about your life’s purpose and meaning; write down your insights in your Refresh journal. Periodically review your entries and writings in your journal. This exercise will keep you focused on your personal goals, values and inspirations.

For additional inspiration, visit

How to Be More Spiritual Every Day - Dr. Wayne Dyer
DAY 7: LEARN ABOUT MINDFULNESS

Listen/ watch this Mindfulness 101 webinar

OR

Read the article - Nine Essential Qualities of Mindfulness – click on link below:

Nine Essential Qualities of Mindfulness
DAY 8 - BE MINDFUL OF NATURE

For 15 minutes, go outside and enjoy the beauty of nature. Focus on plants, flowers, trees, birds, clouds in the sky, a leaf formation, etc. Use your senses to take it all in: smell, touch, see, hear, taste the air!

Take a couple of minutes and capture your feelings about this experience in your Refresh journal.
DAY 9: CHECK YOUR MOOD

Mood is an overall feeling and attitude that can vary from hour to hour, day to day and week to week. We might think of mood as an overall barometer of how we’re doing in a particular moment, even if it’s not always easy to identify. Importantly however, moods are rarely a complete mystery and outside of our control. A first and fundamental step is to find a word or words that capture an overall feeling and attitude so that we have something to work with.

Moods can be explained by a number of factors which can be the focus of positive change to improve mood and reduce stress.

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• **Physical Factors** relate to self-care of the body which includes getting adequate sleep and nutrition, minimizing the use of alcohol and other substances, and attending to illness when sick. Taking care of these basics can maintain or improve mood, while overlooking them can affect mood negatively.

• **Situational Factors** are the immediate circumstances that are occurring or that just occurred including when, where and with whom events are happening or have happened. Pleasant or exciting situations can affect mood positively and stressful situations affect mood negatively. Though it’s not always possible, changing one’s situation or even small aspects of situations can improve mood.

• **Thought Factors** are the thoughts and attitudes that we have regarding our immediate or recent situation. When under stress, thoughts that focus on keeping things in perspective (e.g., “this too shall pass”) and that are reminders of strength (e.g., “I’ve survived worse”) can help mood and reduce stress. There are also thoughts that contribute to feeling overwhelmed and that a stressful situation will never end (e.g., “I can’t take anymore and at this rate, I’ll never be happy”). It is important to monitor our thoughts because they can help us stay understand and connect with our mood.
Exercise – Use your journal and complete the following questions to monitor your mood.

1. Using the Emoji symbols (facial expressions), which illustrate mood – determine how do you feel today?

2. What physical factors may be affecting your mood today? Are there ways to attend to these physical factors to improve your inner feelings and mood?

3. What situational factors may be affecting your current mood? Is there an aspect of your current situation that can be changed to reducing stress and/or improve your mood?

4. Are there thoughts that may be impacting your current mood? If your overall mood is positive, what thoughts help you keep life in perspective and remain hopeful? If your overall mood is negative, are there pessimistic, gloomy thoughts that can be changed to help improve mood and reduce stress?
DAY 10: MINDFUL EATING

Eat one meal today in a slow and mindful fashion so that you truly enjoy each bite, as well as notice the texture of your food.

Another approach is to eat a snack such as raisins, fruit, popcorn or peanuts using the method outlined below:

1. Find a comfortable seated position. Come into the present moment by taking a few breaths, noticing how you feel physically.

2. Place a snack in your hand. Notice the impulse you might have to pop them all in your mouth right away.

3. Take a minute and look at your snack, examining it with curiosity as if you’ve never seen one before.

4. Notice how they feel in your hand – the texture, shape and weight. You may want to close your eyes while doing this.

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5. Notice the color of the snack and if they have any unique features.

6. Imagine where the snack came from, how it was created. Picture the development, growth, preparation, and transportation of the snacks to the store.

7. Slowly bring one snack to your nose to see what it smells like. Notice how naturally your arm moves to do this.

8. Continue to notice any thoughts of like or dislike you might have of as you observe the snack. Notice whether you’re anticipating what it will taste like. Perhaps you’re starting to salivate or feeling an impulse to put it into your mouth right away.

9. Ever so slowly, place the snack in your mouth, without biting into it. Explore what it feels like in your mouth, notice what your tongue is doing. Keep it in your mouth without chewing for at least 10 seconds. Notice what it’s like to take this time before eating the snack.

10. When you are ready, slowly and softly bite into the snack, taking one or two bites.

11. Without swallowing, notice what it tastes like, how its flavor and texture changes as you chew. Notice your natural impulse to swallow it.

12. When you are ready, swallow the snack. Sit quietly and notice what you are feeling.

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In your journal, write down the meal or snack you selected and describe the experience of being mindful while eating.

Source: Adapted from Mindful eating exercise, Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD

To understand more about mindful eating, click on the article below: Harvard Health Letter - Mindful Eating
DAY 11: PRACTICE MINDFUL SELF-ACCEPTANCE

Mindful self-acceptance is focusing on accepting who you are, as you are, on this day.

Listen to the 10-minute video interview of Dr. Karen Neff an expert on self-compassion, and practice at least one suggested strategy and write about the experience in your journal.

Dr. Neff - Self Compassion

To learn more about self-acceptance and compassion, visit:

- Three Elements of Self Compassion
- Dr. Karen Wegela - Mindfulness and Self-acceptance
DAY 12: UNPLUG FROM TECHNOLOGY

Unplug – disconnect from all electronic devices today (including social media, emails, television, radio, gaming devices, etc.) for at least five hours today. This will help with your stress level and will provide time to reconnect with self. This experience can provide the opportunity to discover new interests and past hobbies. Use the gift of time from unplugging to explore new areas of interest and opportunities.

6 Reasons to Unplug

Return to Calendar
DAY 13: EXPLORE MINDFUL FORGIVENESS

Clear your mind and consider the benefits of forgiving yourself or another for a mistake, broken promise, a hurtful exchange or shortcoming. There are times that we stay stuck in the mindset of anger, frustration, and/or disappointment, which ultimately keeps one stuck in the past. Forgiveness can free your mind, heart and spirit from past hurts, pain and resentment.

Read more about this topic.
Dr. David Wells - Mindful Forgiveness

In your Refresh journal, identify one person you would like to forgive in your life and how you would like to go about it.

Return to Calendar
DAY 14: EXPLORE A CULTURAL TRADITION THROUGH CONVERSATION

Explore the richness of cultural traditions and differences by initiating a conversation to learn more about the ethnic practices of a friend, colleague or neighbor. Participate in an activity that broadens your understanding of another culture (e.g., shop in a new area where there are culturally diverse stores, visit a museum, read a book about a different culture, etc.).

Read this short article to learn more about this idea:
Psychology Today: Between Cultures - Million Ways to say hello

Return to Calendar
DAY 15: ENJOY TIME WITH A CO-WORKER

Have a 5-minute conversation with someone you rarely talk to at work. Ask them a question about something that you don’t know about them. In your journal, record any experiences of feeling surprised or interested, and any motivation to further a connection with that person.

Learn more about communication below:

Help Guide - Effective Communication.
DAY 16: LAUGHTER BREAK

Share a funny memory or funny story with someone so that both of you can laugh.

Creating opportunities for laughter can be an easy and useful strategy for managing a stressful situation. Practiced over time, humor and laughter can enhance emotional resilience and overall well being.

To view an interesting example of combining laughter with other stress management strategies, see the youtube video about laughter yoga below:

Dr. Madan Kataria - Laughter Yoga

You can schedule a Laughter Yoga break for your team and have some fun!
DAY 17: SUPPORT OTHERS

Stand in solidarity with others. Take the pledge for the “Great American Smoke Out” (GASO). All you have to do is give up a habit for a day, such as coffee or soda. Click here to take the pledge:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/2016GASO.

Altruism is a core value of many world religions and philosophies and is assumed to bring happiness. In fact, research psychologists have determined that providing support for others has mental health and stress management benefits.

Write down the habit or indulgence you are giving up today in your Refresh journal to support of others. Capture the impact throughout the day.

To learn more, go to University of Berkeley Wellness: The Benefits of Giving
DAY 18: SHARE YOUR SMILE

Smiles are contagious. They are also healthy for you. Read the article contained in the link below and share your smile with others throughout an entire day. In your journal, record your observations about the impact of the exercise on your emotions and experience of stress.

Karen Kleiman, LCSW - Try Some Smile Therapy.
DAY 19: ENGAGE IN A FUN ACTIVITY

Enjoy a fun activity with a family member, friend, or pet. Plan an activity that takes an hour or less and write about any impact of the experience on your level of stress.

Play is a fundamental and healthy part of being a child or teen, but can have enormous value for adults as well. By its nature, play involves being in the moment, spontaneity and suspending worry about ordinary or extraordinary stress. To read more about the mental health benefits of play, see the article below:

The Benefits of Play for Adults
DAY 20 - RECONNECT WITH AN OLD FRIEND

Reconnect by calling or visiting a friend or family member you haven’t talked to in a long time.

 Meaningful social connection is a basic emotional need that can be overlooked in the busyness of work and family obligations. Maintaining healthy connections in which there is shared history and reciprocal support is important for a sense of stability and for minimizing experiences of loneliness.

When you have time, write about the experience of reconnecting in your Refresh journal.

For ideas about reconnecting with friends and family, follow the link below:

5 Simple Ways to Reconnect with Old Friends

How to reconnect with friends and family

Return to Calendar
DAY 21: COMPLIMENT YOURSELF

Write down 5 traits or strengths about yourself that you appreciate. Reflect on these strengths as a way to express gratitude to yourself throughout the day.

Learn about your strengths by clicking on the link below: VIA Classification of Character Strengths

Return to Calendar
DAY 22: COMPLIMENT OTHERS

Take time to express your gratitude for others in your life. This could be a friend, loved one, and/or coworker for a way they have helped or supported you. Take today to say “thank you” as many times as you can!

Try up to 3 different ways of expressing gratitude. For example:

1. **Words of Recognition**: Thank you. I appreciate your help on the project.

2. **What You Appreciate**: I like the way you put so much thought into our work together.

3. **Why It's Important**: Thanks for listening to me today because now I feel more supported during this stressful time.

Return to Calendar
DAY 23: CAPTURE TEAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Write in your Refresh journal at least two work team accomplishments that occurred during the last month. What contributed to the team’s success? Share your observations with your team members as a way to express gratitude.

Use this article to generate some ideas: Characteristics of Good Team Members.

Return to Calendar
DAY 24: WRITE 3 THINGS YOU ARE GRATEFUL FOR

Areas of gratitude may relate to nature, your health, relationships, technology, etc., to name a few.

To receive some inspiration, watch this 5 minute video on gratitude: http://gratefulness.org/resource/a-good-day/

Share if you wish: In conversation, in writing, photos, or social media, the 3 things you might take for granted and are grateful for in your life.
DAY 25: LEARN THE BENEFITS OF GRATITUDE

To understand the great benefits of giving gratitude, check out:

Psychology Today - Benefits of Gratitude.
DAY 26: WRITE A “THANK-YOU” NOTE

Write or type a thank you note to someone you’ve wanted to thank for something, but just haven't yet. Take the time to mail, email or hand-deliver the note. If you need some ideas about what to include in your note, visit: Thank You Card Messages.
DAY 27: PAY IT FORWARD

In your Refresh journal, capture your favorite activity from this week of gratitude practices. Pay it forward by sharing the activity with a friend, family member or co-worker. Discuss with them what you learned about the benefits of giving gratitude.
DAY 28: WATCH THE TED TALK ON “HOW TO MAKE STRESS YOUR FRIEND” BY DR. KELLY MCGONIGAL

Click here to watch TED Talk: How to Make Stress Your Friend

Now that you have viewed the TED Talk, identify one new strategy you will begin to implement to embrace stress more effectively. Write this technique in your Refresh journal.
Select a strategy from this list developed by the American Psychological Association to practice today:

- **Make connections.** Good relationships with close family members, friends or others are important. Accepting help and support from those who care about you and will listen to you strengthens resilience. Some people find that being active in civic groups, faith-based organizations, or other local groups provides social support and can help with reclaiming hope. Assisting others in their time of need also can benefit the helper.

- **Avoid seeing crises as insurmountable problems.** You can't change the fact that highly stressful events happen, but you can change how you interpret and respond to these events. Try looking beyond the present to how future circumstances may be a little better. Note any subtle ways in which you might already feel somewhat better as you deal with difficult situations.

- **Accept that change is a part of living.** Certain goals may no longer be attainable as a result of adverse situations. Accepting circumstances that cannot be changed can help you focus on circumstances that you can alter.
• **Move toward your goals.** Develop some realistic goals. Do something regularly — even if it seems like a small accomplishment — that enables you to move toward your goals. Instead of focusing on tasks that seem unachievable, ask yourself, "What's one thing I know I can accomplish today that helps me move in the direction I want to go?"

• **Take decisive actions.** Act on adverse situations as much as you can. Take decisive actions, rather than detaching completely from problems and stresses and wishing they would just go away.

• **Look for opportunities for self-discovery.** People often learn something about themselves and may find that they have grown in some respect as a result of their struggle with loss. Many people who have experienced tragedies and hardship have reported better relationships, greater sense of strength even while feeling vulnerable, increased sense of self-worth, a more developed spirituality and heightened appreciation for life.

• **Nurture a positive view of yourself.** Developing confidence in your ability to solve problems and trusting your instincts helps build resilience.

• **Keep things in perspective.** Even when facing very painful events, try to consider the stressful situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Avoid blowing the event out of proportion.

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• **Maintain a hopeful outlook.** An optimistic outlook enables you to expect that good things will happen in your life. Try visualizing what you want, rather than worrying about what you fear.

• **Take care of yourself.** Pay attention to your own needs and feelings. Engage in activities that you enjoy and find relaxing. Exercise regularly. Taking care of yourself helps to keep your mind and body primed to deal with situations that require resilience.

• **Additional ways of strengthening resilience may be helpful.** Meditation and spiritual practices help some people build connections and restore hope.


Learn more about resilience:

- [Characteristics of Resilience](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx)
- [How to Improve Your Resilience](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/road-resilience.aspx)
DAY 30: CREATE A PLAN TO SUSTAIN EMOTIONAL WELLNESS

Congratulations on your completion of “Refresh from Stress: 30-Day Inspiration!”
Now it’s time to create a plan to continue prioritizing and practicing emotional wellness.

Complete the “Staying Refreshed from Stress” plan on the next page, print/copy and post your action plan to keep “refreshing” yourself. Commit to use the skills, activities, and support you found most helpful over the last month. Also, please review the additional “Refreshing Resources” to assist you.

We wish you continued wellness and inspiration!
On behalf of the FSAP Team, thank you for participating in Refresh from Stress: 30 Day Inspiration!
“Staying Refreshed From Stress” Inspiration Plan

Starting on (date) _____________, I (name) ______________________ commit to the following plan to keep “Refreshing From Stress.”

Benefits I Experience When I “Refresh From Stress”:

1. _______________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________
3. _______________________________________________________

Signs That I’m Stressed and Need To “Refresh from Stress”:

1. _______________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________

My Favorite “Refreshers”, When & How I’ll Remind Myself to Use Them (e.g., set reminders in my phone / sticky notes):

1. _______________________________________________________
2. _______________________________________________________
3. _______________________________________________________

I will share my plan with ________________________ (support person). I will meet with him/her & ask them to check-in with me on my progress every/on ______________________ (e.g., last Fri each month at 7 pm).

If I need additional assistance with managing stress, I can contact Emory’s Faculty Staff Assistance Program (information below) and/or ____________________________.

Faculty Staff Assistance Program
404-727-WELL or 404-727-4328
www.fsap.emory.edu
Refreshing Resources
Here are some additional links to inspire yourself and others to reduce stress!

Brief, inspirational/educational stress management & self-care videos:
https://www.ted.com/playlists/315/talks_to_help_you_manage_stress
https://www.ted.com/playlists/299/the_importance_of_self_care

Communication Skills: http://newconversations.net/sevenchallenges.pdf

Gratitude: http://gratefulness.org/explore/new-to-gratefulness/


Self-Compassion: http://self-compassion.org/

Stress Management: http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-management.htm#resources

White Noise & Natural Sound Effects to Help with Sleep & Relaxation:
http://www.soundsleeping.com/index.php
http://www.tmsoft.com/white-noise-player/

Smart Phone “Apps”

Boosting Happiness and Gratitude:
http://www.happify.com/

“Headspace” Mindfulness: https://www.headspace.com/headspace-meditation-app

Track Your Mood and Emotional Health:
http://www.findingoptimism.com/

Faculty Staff Assistance Program
404-727-WELL or 404-727-4328
www.fsap.emory.edu