



May: Elevate your mood*

Incorporating these tips into your daily routine can help elevate your mood and energy levels. They can also be useful in stressful moments to help you calm down.

Engage in physical activity. Engaging in an enjoyable physical activity can reliably boost your mood and lower stress. Even just three minutes of movement can have a positive effect. Physical activity done earlier in the day can also promote better sleep, further enhancing your mood. If you're short on time, try breaking up your sedentary behaviors by aiming to walk for a few minutes every hour or so.

Get out in nature. Provided that you feel safe, getting out in nature can lower your stress and lift your mood. Even gazing at a nature scene (through your window or in a photo) can relax you.

Soak in the sun. Spending 10-15 minutes in the sun can boost serotonin and endorphin levels. Morning sun can help adjust your circadian rhythms so that you sleep better at night, further promoting energy and mood.

Get a belly laugh. Laughing is a great way to dispel tension and lighten the mood. Laughing with others triggers an ancient evolutionary system that enables us to form social bonds and regulate emotions.

Engage your sense of smell. Any scent that you find appealing can improve your mood. You can purchase specific essential oils or use those scents around you.

Produce oxytocin with a hug. If there's no one else around to hug you, lay a hand on your cheek or chest for a moment or two to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, calm down, and feel safe.

Turn up your favorite songs. Music improves mood, reduces stress and anxiety, and increases focus. The next time you dread a task, play your favorite tunes and it suddenly won't seem so bad.

Turn your focus outward and do something nice for someone else. Make another person's day a little better while improving *your* mood. Ask a coworker or a roommate if they need help with anything, give your pet a treat, or thank a helpful customer service person.

Connect with a loved one. When we turn towards someone with difficult feelings of sadness and anger and they respond without judgment or defensiveness, that helps us move through those feelings. It doesn't have to be a lengthy conversation; even a 5-minute phone call or text thread is enough to know that someone is there for you when you need them.

Take five minutes to breathe. Deep, slow breaths can help calm your stress response, especially with long, slow exhalations. Consider adding a mindfulness meditation to build your "muscles" of attention and mindfulness by paying attention to the breath, intentionally bringing your mind back to the breath when it invariably wanders. If your goal is to energize, aim for longer inhales than exhales.

*The [Faculty Staff Help Center](#) provides short-term help for Stanford employees, post-docs and family members.