

STRESS

*The Most ~~Wonderful~~ Time  
of the Year*



Midterms, college app deadlines, gift buying decisions, making time for your squad and bae ... life. is. cray. Plus, in addition to these seasonal stressors, Black girls have to deal with issues that can add to the drama all times of the year, such as gender and racial discrimination, which can have long-term health effects. Check our stress survival guide for the goods on how to re**z**enter your life.

By L'Oreal Thompson Payton

# RELAX

You've got four to five hours of sleep on lock every night, so you're good, right? Yeah, no. Hate to put you on blast, but according to the National Sleep Foundation, teens need between 8 and 10 hours of sleep per night. Here's how to get yours:

## Silence That Hotline Bling

Your phone has absolutely no chill, so shut it down or put it on "Do not disturb" mode and keep it further away from you than a quick arm's reach. Not only can this help you avoid obsessively checking to see if your crush texted you back throughout the night, but it can also improve your ability to get a good night's sleep.

## Make Bedtime Bae

Now that your celly's on sleep mode, you can be, too. Plan to go to bed around 11 p.m. (the typical time teens start to feel sleepy, according to the Nationwide Children's Hospital) every night, and set your alarm — an actual alarm clock, instead of the one on your phone — for eight hours later. Sticking to a set schedule will get your body used to falling asleep earlier and waking up fully refreshed.

## After-School Turn Down

Besides sleep, you're gonna need to bring that school-day stress down a notch before starting a marathon homework session. #TreatYoSelf to a snack and 30 minutes of TV time to give your brain a little break.

**OMG!**  
"The use of portable light-emitting devices immediately before bedtime has biological effects that may perpetuate sleep deficiency and disrupt circadian rhythms, both of which can have adverse impacts on performance, health, and safety."



SOURCE: *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*

# RELATE

Keeping things bottled up is never a good look. Felicia Kinlock, a licensed clinical social worker, suggests talking things out with a friend, teacher, pastor, or coach.

## Kick It with Your #GirlSquad

Hanging with the homies not only keeps your social agenda on point, but it can also help you fight the funk as well. On the real, don't you always feel better after venting to your crew about whatever problems you've got goin' on? Plus, studies show that having a close group of friends can help you live longer, avoid depression, and increase your self-esteem. Now how's that for #SquadGoals?

## Z's on Fleek

"Sleeping is the way for our bodies to recharge and decompress from the day," says Kinlock. "Poor sleep leads to an inability to function optimally and think clearly. It will also make you feel more cranky and more prone to reacting poorly in stressful situations."

### Good Vibes Only

More than just a cute thing to say in your Twitter bio, you can legit squash stress by surrounding yourself with people who are positive. And when you feel yourself automatically leaning toward the worst outcome of a situation, chill on that. It may take some practice, but it'll ultimately keep you in a much better headspace.

### Chop It Up

Got an issue that's more on the serious tip than your friends can probably handle? Talk it out with an adult that you trust. And don't ever be afraid to discuss your feelings with a therapist or school counselor if you feel you need help from a pro.

LOLOLOL

Laughter can help boost your immune system, lessen pain, and keep stress levels in check.



# RELEASE

**Let. It. Go.** It may take a while to brush it all of those shoulders, but these tips are a good start.

### Keep It Movin'

Stay getting' that workout to really help reduce stress and anxiety and increase your focus and energy. So, even if you don't actually need any more P.E. credits, sign up for a class like yoga, weight training, or swimming anyway, or try out for a team sport. "Biologically, exercise seems to give the body a chance to practice dealing with stress," states the American Psychological Association. "It forces the body's physiological systems — all of which are involved in the stress response — to communicate much more closely than usual."

### Meditate on This

Getting into chill mode is as easy as downloading an app (check out our faves on this page!). Take a few minutes each day — seriously, some of these exercises only take 3 to 5 minutes — to try some guided mediation and deep breathing. It'll help boost your mood, improve your health, and relax your mind.

### Get Creative

Spill it all out by journaling, painting, cooking, and even cleaning. Redirecting all that pent up energy can not only leave you with some bomb creations and a spotless room, but also a whole lot less anxiety and stress.

Peep some stress-relieving yoga moves at [sesimag.com](http://sesimag.com).

## 4 Meditation Apps to Calm Your Mind, Body & Soul

### Stop, Breathe & Think

With guided meditations tailored to how you're feeling at that exact moment, you're only a few taps away from releasing stress, finding balance, and improving your overall outlook on life.

### MindShift

Test anxiety? Perfectionism? Social fears? Handled, handled, and yep, handled! Start off by choosing a situation you want help coping with and MindShift will suggest specific steps to help you deal.

### Take a Chill -- Stressed Teens

Only for iPhone use right now, this app (available for \$1.99) delivers a daily dose of quick mindful exercises and free audio tracks to help you overcome stressful moments. Also, the motivational quotes give you that extra inspo to get through the day.

### Attitudes of Gratitude Journal

Every day, think of only the good things that happened and type them in the text box. All of your thankfulness will be saved and you can pull up past entries any time you need a pick-me-up. You can even set the app to remind you to write something each day, so you don't forget to show yourself and your day some much-needed love.