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## Learning To Relax Your Mind and Body

(CBS) All week long, The Early Show has been featuring stories about life's "Simple Pleasures" - small things that make you feel good.

Friday, the focus is on easy relaxation techniques you can do anywhere, anytime to relieve stress in your body and mind.

You don't have to be a fitness buff to reap the benefits. Stephanie Oakes, the fitness editor for USA Weekend magazine, visits The Early Show to offer advice.

Get off to a good start by performing some of these in the morning, loosen up during a stressful day at the office, or unwind before bed.

First things first. If you're feeling stressed, take a deep breath. This will help bring more oxygen into your body and immediately make you feel better.

You might also consider meditation. Many people think of meditation as some kind of unusual, holy or spiritual activity.

"This is one of the basic beliefs we try to overcome," Oakes says. "The point is that mediation is completely normal. What we're doing is taming our mind. We're trying to overcome all sorts of anxieties and agitation, all sorts of habitual thought patterns, so we are able to sit with ourselves."

Think about it: When was the last time you sat completely still for 10 or 20 minutes and did not think about any of the pressing details in your life, didn't answer the phone or look at e-mail? Doing this can be very restful.

Also, meditation has been proven (by real, scientific studies at places like Harvard) to reduce stress and provide other benefits such as lowering blood pressure, etc.

"The National Institutes of Health found that 80 to 90 percent of all illnesses are caused by stress, either directly or indirectly," Oakes says. "Clearly, something more than positive thinking, counseling, morale boosters or even traditional exercise is needed. Transcendental Meditation technique was found to be more than twice as effective at reducing stress than any other form of relaxation."

Of course, there are many different types of meditation, but Transcendental Meditation has been around for a long time, and has been studied by doctors, scientists and others for over 30 years. The Beatles practiced this type of meditation. Basically, Transcendental Meditation teaches you how to completely quiet your mind. It's recommended to do it 20 or 30 minutes, up to twice a day if possible.