



Got Stress?

Stop, Drop & Roll

An Instant Stress Buster

from Bhava Ram, cancer survivor and
author of *Warrior Pose*

Who among us doesn't feel stress? It seems like an unavoidable fact of life in our modern, fast-paced world. And it's a killer. More than two million Americans die each year from cancer, heart disease, stroke, diabetes, alcoholism and drug addiction. All have a major stress component, and an increasing number of scientific studies consistently show that stress reduction is an essential component for healing and wholeness.

Even if stress doesn't kill us, the damage it does is profound. The inner chemistry created by the fight or flight mode of stress weakens our immune systems and metabolism, promotes tension and insomnia, and even ages us.

Stress deeply affects our personal and professional lives as well. How many times have we wished we hadn't reacted so quickly to a situation that triggered us? Spoken harshly when that's not how we really want to show up? Made a situation worse rather than better? Hurt someone we love? Ruined our day?

The stress response becomes a deeply ingrained habit that we often feel powerless to control. But there's a way out. We do have the power to retrain ourselves, shift our inner chemistry from fight or flight to rest and restore, and become more skillful in action rather than succumbing to reaction. I call it Stop, Drop, and Roll.

You might have heard this as a child when members of the fire department came to your school to teach you how to survive your school or home catches fire. You should stop, they warn, to avoid going deeper into the inferno. Then you drop to the ground to avoid the choking smoke, then you slowly roll out to safety. It's the same way with stress. The trick is to Stop, Drop, and Roll.

Stop

When you feel a stress moment coming on, STOP. Pause a moment. Take a few deep breaths, focusing on your exhale. Visualize your in-breath as providing you with a peaceful power to meet the situation. Visualize your exhale as a deep healing release. Take as much time as you

need. Sooner than you think, your heart rate will slow down, your thoughts will soften, and that acid taste of cortisol and adrenalin—the molecules of stress inside your body—will begin to melt away.

Drop

The next step is to repeat a silent affirmation, such as, “I can handle this. I am calm and relaxed. I can handle this.” This mantra is like a yoga pose for your mind and helps you enter a state of stillness and balance. As your mind settles, visualize that you are dropping your conscious from your head down to your heart-center. This is the home of your spirit, your inner guru. Remind yourself that you always have a choice. That you can choose to act skillfully rather than react. That through skillful action you can turn stressful moments into opportunities for personal growth. You can turn hurt into healing. A positive outcome is possible.

You might notice a sweeter taste with your body now, that adrenalin and cortisol have been replaced with the nectar of oxytocin, epinephrine, and anandamide. These are molecules of healing and wholeness that promote emotions of compassion, forgiveness, understanding and loving kindness.

Roll

Still anchored in your heart-center, access your inner wisdom by asking, “How can I bring my best self to this situation? What would be skillful action rather than a reaction? How can I honor everyone involved even if I don’t feel honored? How can I resolve this in a state of peace? Your inner wisdom is profound. Your heart will whisper an answer so quickly it might amaze you. It will guide you into rolling with the situation rather than becoming embroiled in it. The outcome will be helpful rather than hurtful. Healing will happen every time you Stop, Drop, and Roll.