4 Ways to De-Stress While Driving

Many of us have to commute to work, which means there’s a chance of getting stuck in traffic. Or, if you’re one of the lucky ones who has an easy, congestion-free commute, work-related stressors are most likely having an impact on you, even when you clock out for the night. Here’s four tips on letting it all go, whether you’re on your way to work or heading home.

1. Out, Out, Damn Tension

As you’re sitting at a red light, grip the steering wheel tightly, hunch your shoulders up toward your ears, and scrunch up your face to exaggerate the feeling of tension in your body. Even curl your toes in and tighten your calves-squeeze everything you can possibly squeeze. Then with a big exhale and/or sigh, let every ounce of that effort go and feel the tension being whisked out of your body. Then, like the shampoo bottle says, rinse and repeat.

2. Green Means Breathe

Use some mundane part of driving as a reminder to take a deep breath. It could be every time the light turns green, or you turn on your blinker, or you change lanes. (If you’re a city dweller and don’t drive much, you can do this on the bus or train and take a breath every time they announce the next stop.) It’s kind of like the college drinking game where you watch a TV show and everyone takes a sip when the lead character says his trademark line - only better for you.

3. Posture Practice

We’d all like to have better posture. Take your car time as an opportunity to hone your ability to sit up tall. As you’re driving, bring your awareness to lifting the back of your neck up. This basic adjustment ripples all the way down your spine and helps it unfurl to its maximum length. Keep checking in with this spot as you drive - you’ll find again and again that you’ve sunk back down into your usual slouch. Just start again. It becomes an exercise for your mind as much as for your body.

4. Blow Off Steam

You kinda need to be alone in the car for this one. (And you probably don’t want to be on public transportation.) If you’re frustrated or anxious or stressed about anything, let it out by making a noise. It could be a scream, a groan, a sigh, or a whinny. There’s no right way to do it. The only direction I have for you is to do it with the intention of releasing whatever’s bothering you so you can move on. When I did a house-sitting stint in LA, I started to relish my freeway time because I could make all these noises that I would never allow myself to make if I were within hearing distance of other people. Letting out a big ole roar is incredibly cathartic, if a little odd. If you’re scratching your head at this one, just try it.