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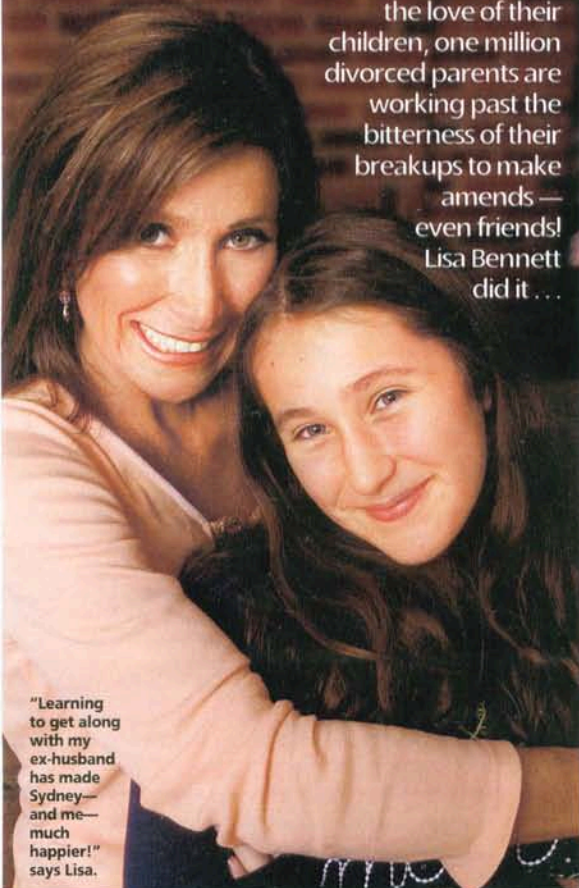
Stressed?
 60-second tension busters



6 simple

In the News: The Friendly Divorce

Could you be friends with your ex?



It works for Demi Moore and Bruce Willis. Now, for the love of their children, one million divorced parents are working past the bitterness of their breakups to make amends—even friends! Lisa Bennett did it...

"Learning to get along with my ex-husband has made Sydney—and me—much happier!" says Lisa.

In a golden light, Lisa and Jim Bennett watch their nine-year-old daughter, Sydney, on horseback and exchange a look of pride. It's an ordinary moment, two loving parents admiring their daughter. There's just one exception: Lisa and Jim are *divorced*...

Lisa never imagined life would be like this. When the Malvern, Pennsylvania, mom said "I do," it was supposed to be forever. But 12 years into their marriage, she and Jim began drifting apart. Lisa chalked it up to Jim's business struggles and the recent loss of his mom. But three days before Christmas, he asked for a divorce.

First came shock, then immeasurable sadness. Lisa tried to hide her pain from Sydney, then seven. But she could hardly stand being in the same room as Jim when he picked Sydney up for visits, never mind striking up a conversation at soccer practice.

Then one day, Sydney's teacher called, concerned. "Sydney broke down today," she explained. "She said her parents don't love her anymore." No matter what had transpired between her and Jim, Lisa realized, it wasn't Sydney's fault. She deserved her mom and her dad. But how would they get beyond the bitterness?

Unwedded bliss? Soon after, Lisa bumped into Jim at Sydney's baseball game. "We have to put this hatred behind us," she blurted. "Sydney's suffering."

Jim agreed: Even if they were no longer a couple, they had to parent as a team.

So for Sydney's sake, Lisa and Jim put on a good face at wedding competitions and school events. As getting along became a habit, Lisa's bitterness and Jim's hostility fell away.

And as they chatted, it struck Lisa: What once brought them

together—like their senses of humor—she and Jim still shared. And they'd given each other Sydney.

That summer, Lisa invited Jim along on their beach vacation. They both brought Sydney trick-or-treating, and spent Christmas Eve together—with Jim's new girlfriend.

To some, Lisa knows, their situation may seem strange. But surveys show it's what a million divorced parents are working toward. And Sydney's happiness makes it worth it.

"We had a choice," says Lisa, who's dating now, too. "Sydney could grow up surrounded by anger, or we could move past it. Sydney knows she's loved and when I'm with her, it's like hanging out with a good friend."
 —Kristin Hugson-Hughes

Did you know?
 Forgiving can make you younger: A recent study suggests that chronic anger can speed up lung aging.

Get rid of anger—in 30 seconds!



- 1 Find a quiet, private place.** Close your eyes.
- 2 Visualize the person who upset you.**

3 Imagine ties stretching between you. "These are the residue of leftover negative emotions," explains Susan Shumsky, author of *Exploring Meditation*.

4 Picture cutting the ties. Say aloud, "I am cutting all negative ties between (the person) and me."

5 Breathe deeply, and open your eyes.

Why it works: "When the mind is relaxed in a meditative state, it's very receptive to suggestions," says Shumsky.

How to get along better with anybody

When you're not crazy about that friend, but can't avoid them...

● **Think of something happy when you see them—** "sunshine, a card you just got in the mail, even a favorite place," recommends relationship counselor Auriela McCarthy (www.howtostopbeingright.com). "It'll forge a positive association that will make the person seem more tolerable to you."

● **Imagine the tough stuff in her life.** "She probably has a few burdens in her life—and feeling compassion makes it easier to relate," says McCarthy.

● **Find something to like about her.** Everyone has good points! Is she close to her kids? Does she love animals? Have a pretty smile? Focus on these, and watch good feelings blossom.

● **Go a little out of your way.** Buying coffee? Pick one up for her, too. Caring for someone helps you automatically feel kinder toward them—and may just bring kindness in return!



"If we can do it, anyone can," says Lisa, with Sydney and Jim.

Photos: Scott Hamrick (2); Corbis.

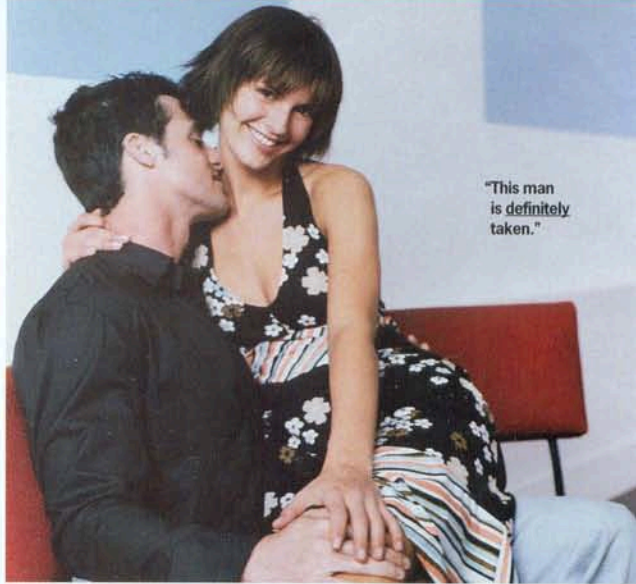
WHY DON'T YOU...

BY JESSICA MEHALIC



...compliment a colleague.

Give a deserving coworker some credit by applauding a specific accomplishment. Follow up your personal praise with an E-mail to her, also copying her boss. "Recognize the effort she put in and the positive result that her hard work has achieved," says Johanna Schlegel, editor in chief of Salary.com. "This E-mail will give her something tangible to use at her next performance review and could help her land a higher salary." What you'll get out of this: karma.



"This man is definitely taken."

...perch on your prince.

Show the world that you and your beau are a blissfully happy couple by sitting on his lap the next time you're out together. "This is a timeless, sweet expression of two people belonging to each other," says Janice Wine, a couples therapist and coauthor of *Why Do Fools Fall in Love?* It's not so mushy that the people around you want to gag...not to mention how chivalrous and manly your patootie-plant will make him feel. Just skip the gesture Grated—this should not evolve into a lap dance.



Natural wonder: Contemplate outdoors.

...let your mind loose.

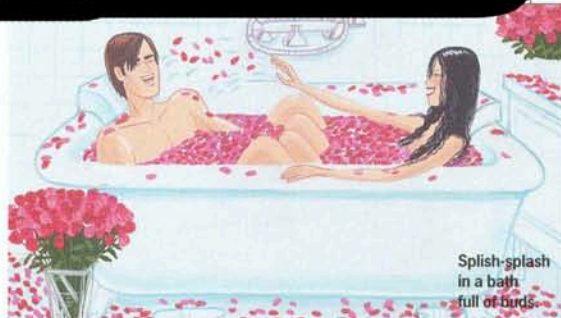
Stressed? Stumped? Struggling for creativity? "Meditation helps your thoughts flow and your nerves unravel," says Susan G. Shumsky, Ph.D., author of *Exploring Meditation*. Take advantage of the summer weather and reflect in a peaceful, natural setting. Take several deep breaths and pose a burning question in your mind, like *What should I do in regards to...?* "And then do nothing," says Shumsky. "Don't try to seek the answer to your problem or question. It will eventually come to you."



Carrie exudes panache in the produce aisle.

...get glammed up for the grocer.

Grocery shopping and dropping off the dry cleaning get a lot more interesting when all eyes are on gorgeous you. Tempted as you are to throw on sweats and sneaks when you're taking care of menial tasks, opt for the bowl-them-over bombshell look instead. Dressing in your sultry best (which may not be of the Sarah Jessica Parker variety—not too many people can pull that off) will flip your mind-set from mundane to "Oh, the possibilities." And who knows who you'll meet.

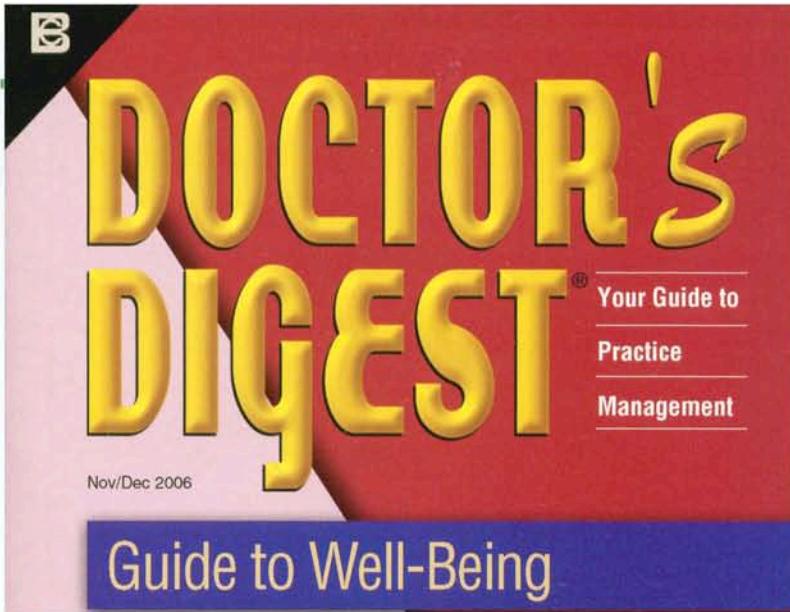


Splish-splash in a bath full of birds.

...run a sexy tub for two.

Sprinkle rose petals all over the bathroom (on the floor, around the sink, floating on the water in the tub), then invite your fella to join you in a cool bloom-laden bath by candlelight. While he may not savor the sensuality of getting it on in a virtual flower garden (come on, he's a guy), he will be very grateful for your efforts. "He'll appreciate all the trouble you went to in arranging something special, as well as the fact that you're making the moves on him," says Kara Oh, author of *Men Made Easy*. "Plus, it's an excuse to get naked and be playful." What man doesn't live for that?

(basketball players) Rick Stewart/Allsport; (butterfly) Photodisc/Getty Images; (illustration) MARCIN BARANSKI; (couple) TAMARA SCHLESINGER; (sittings editor) Orla Maguire-Moore; (hair) Hyunsoo for Artists; (makeup) Jonnie Buck for Tiffany Whitford, NYC; (on him) Shirt and pants: Banana Republic; (on her) Dress: H&M; (Parker) Bill Davila/Retna.



Effective Stress Management

ally able to accomplish more in less time.

Often meditation or affirmations can have a similar effect. And the more you practice, the more quickly you will learn to relax.

Health Effects of Meditation

Susan Shumsky, a stress management consultant and spiritual meditation teacher in Portland, Ore., points out that all one has to do is go online to find hundreds of studies that show the pos-

itive impact of meditation on stress-related ailments.

To meditate, all you need is five minutes at your desk, Ms. Shumsky says. During this time, you will need to cut any emotional attachments or "psychic ties" to your patients. She explains that doctors and other healers tap into their empathetic nature in trying to serve others; they tend to take on other people's energy or to adopt their emotions. These emotional connections can be draining.

Start by taking three very deep breaths. "That will immediately calm you down," says Ms. Shumsky, who discusses these techniques in her book, *Exploring Meditation: Master the Ancient Art of Relaxation and Enlightenment* (New Page Books, 2001). "It's really a miracle what three deep breaths can do."

She recommends saying the word "peace" or the phrase "Be at peace" repeatedly to yourself. Or, if you're religious, say a prayer. Call upon the God of your belief for divine light, love, and feelings of peace or harmony.

Then say a short affirmation. Ms. Shumsky suggests the following: "I now cut any and all psychic ties between myself and my patients (or mention a specific patient's name). These psychic ties are now lovingly cut, lifted, loved, felt, and released to go into the light of peace."

Or you might try the self-authority affirmation: "I am in control. I am the only authority in my life. I am divinely protected by the light of my being. I close off my energy field to all but my own higher self."

You can also create your own affirming words as long as they communicate a similar message. She says she knows of many doctors who do both affirmations on a regular basis and have achieved powerful and profound results—so much so that they even share them with their patients.

Another technique that Ms. Shumsky recommends is called brain gym, a set of very simple movements that one can do to release stress. She introduces these movements to doctors in her workshops and says they realize immediate results.

Here's the best known of these movements; it is called the "cross crawl": Stand up. Lift your right leg with your knee bent. Slap your thigh above the right knee with the palm of your left hand. Repeat the same movement with your left leg and right

hand. Go back and forth for several minutes. At the same time, look around the room in all fields of vision.

Although the effects of brain gym have not been clinically proven, Ms. Shumsky believes that these exercises can help integrate brain functioning. "You're doing a movement called crossing the midline," she explains. "It also has the effect of immediately clearing out your energy field [so] you are more energized. I have found that brain gym is one of the most powerful techniques available for releasing stress."

Whichever stress reduction technique you use, she says the key is to turn within. Unfortunately, some doctors seek comfort elsewhere, even turning to alcohol or drugs. But by locating your center of inner peace, you can relax, be more content, and achieve greater balance in your life. Then the external strains and stresses that constantly pull you in various directions each day won't affect you as much.

Some doctors also engage in self-hypnosis to reduce their stress. Susan Gayle, a cognitive behavioral modification specialist and hypnotist, says that some doctors don't realize that their stress can also derive from worries about money, as well as

