

Top 25 Bar Exam Stress Management Tools	
1.	<p>Breathing - all sorts of different ways to do this. The most important part is to breathe slowly and deeply. It is the fastest and best way to communicate with the non-verbal part of your brain.</p> <p>http://www.drweil.com/drw/u/ART00521/three-breathing-exercises.html</p> <p>http://cdn.marksdailyapple.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2010/12/NPRDeepBreathing.mp3</p> <p>APPS- Breathe2Relax</p>
2.	<p>Meditation - It rewards your brain and changes your brain’s wiring in positive ways that to tend toward contentment.</p> <p>http://www.nmr.mgh.harvard.edu/~britta/SUN_July11_Baime.pdf</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZljDtHUsRO</p> <p>APPS – Insight Meditation Timer, Buddhify</p>
3.	<p>Avoid isolation; connect with family and friends - Social connectedness is vitally important. It helps to reduce the effects of stress on brain and body; Good hormones (e.g., oxytocin) are released.</p> <p>http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/social-support/art-20044445</p>
4.	<p>Exercise – It’s good for your body: it helps reduce stress, combats anxiety & depression and ... it actually improves cognitive functioning, improves memory, and enhances mood. Good hormones (endorphins) are released – aka “the runner’s high.” <i>Spark: Revolutionary New Science of Exercise and the Brain</i>, John Ratey (2013)</p> <p>http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/exercise-and-stress/art-20044469</p>
5.	<p>Take a fun class – Learn something new, exercise the creative side of your brain; have a scheduled time for your class, prepay for it; E.g., Guitar Lessons, Dog Agility Class, Knitting Class, Tai Chi, Toastmasters, Poetry Writing. Something that is new, different, and that your look forward to --- especially with a friend! No homework!</p> <p>http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/25/health/brain-crafting-benefits/index.html</p> <p>http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/mental-downtime/</p>
6.	<p>Volunteer – It lowers stress, contributes to a sense of well-being, and improves physical health as well!</p>

	<p>http://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/volunteering-may-be-good-for-body-and-mind-201306266428</p>
7.	<p>Power song – Taking breaks is really important for your brain. You can use listening to a song as a meditation or to pump you up! (Choose “We Will Rock You” not “Who Let the Dogs Out.”) Join a choir. It does awesome things for you!</p> <p>http://www.cnn.com/2013/04/15/health/brain-music-research/</p> <p>http://www.unr.edu/counseling/virtual-relaxation-room/releasing-stress-through-the-power-of-music</p>
8.	<p>Humor-break – Breaks are vitally important and if you can combine that with some laughter, you have provided your body and your brain with some much needed feel-good time. Laughing stimulates many organs, activates your stress response and then relaxes your body systems. Laughing also strengthens your immune system.</p> <p>http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relief/art-20044456</p> <p>http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/pub/feap/work-life/newsletters/Humor%20and%20Stress.pdf</p>
9.	<p>Spirituality, religion, and connecting with nature - Spirituality, organized religion, or just communing with nature can help to foster a sense of meaning and purpose (and offer perspective when you are wrapped up in the minutiae of torts, trademarks, or taxation). Being in nature or at least looking out a window at some nature is great for your brain. Light increases serotonin – one of our neurochemicals that helps mood and fights depression. Benefits of being outside: increased attention, focus, & memory; lower stress, and reduced brain fatigue.</p> <p>http://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/stress-relief/art-20044464</p>
10.	<p>Pets – if you have pets, try to maximize your interactions with them; this increases our feel good hormones, lowers stress levels, and lowers blood pressure. If you don’t have pets, you can volunteer to walk dogs at the Humane Society or go visit someplace with a fish tank!</p> <p>http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/story/2012-05-13/dogs-stress-relief-on-campus/54921444/1</p> <p>http://hyper.ahajournals.org/content/38/4/815.full</p>
11.	<p>Commitment & accountability – We are more likely to do pretty much everything if we have another person we feel accountable to. So, get a gym buddy, a walking or running partner, a meditation buddy, a movie break buddy. You get the point!</p> <p>APPS- https://www.stickk.com/</p>

12.	<p>Study groups – Same idea as above, but this can facilitate social connections. Double Advantage: great camaraderie in sitting around with others at a coffee & prepping for bar exam!).</p>
13.	<p>Intimacy – Healthy intimate relationships can be a huge source of support in high stress times; physical contact with other people (even something as simple as a hug or a pat) releases oxytocin in our brains (that’s good) and reduces stress and anxiety (that’s also good).</p>
14.	<p>Gratitude – It’s good for our well-being to make a practice of appreciation. It is also a state of being that increases our social connections.</p> <p>http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/pdfs/GratitudePDFs/2Wood-GratitudeWell-BeingReview.pdf</p> <p>http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_can_help_you_through_hard_times</p>
15.	<p>Savoring practice – Our brain has a <i>negativity bias</i>. Bad experiences stick in our memories while positive experiences flow through like water through a sieve. You can shift your brain toward positivity by savoring a positive moment for just 10-30 seconds. This attention to the positive cements those moments in our memories just like the negative moments. See attachment.</p>
16.	<p>Diet – Quick Tips: 1) Hunger hurts Concentration → eat breakfast (oatmeal is a natural brain food); 2) Good Foods = Alertness → spinach, broccoli, & beans are great alertness foods; 3) Good Glucose = Good Memory → complex carbs (e.g., green veggies, whole grains, beans, lentils, peas & potatoes) provide steady source of glucose, avoiding sugar spikes. Comfort foods (chips, candy bars, pastries) work ok in the moment, but can cause blood-sugar fluctuations that can increase stress and mood swings.</p> <p>http://www.helpguide.org/articles/diet-weight-loss/emotional-eating.htm</p> <p>http://www.webmd.com/food-recipes/healthy-foods-eat-brain-power</p> <p>https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-science-willpower/201111/stress-sugar-and-self-control</p>
17.	<p>Sleep – Sleep deprivation and elevated stress hormones tend to be related. Healthy Tips: Stick to a sleep schedule, develop relaxing pre-bedtime ritual, exercise daily, avoid alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and heavy meals before bedtime; have bedroom that is cool, quiet, and dark. Sweet Dreams!</p> <p>http://sleepfoundation.org/</p> <p>http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/guide/tips-reduce-stress;</p> <p>http://consumer.healthday.com/encyclopedia/stress-management-37/stress-health-news-640/sleep-deprivation-and-stress-646063.html</p>
18.	<p>Know thy self -- You know from experience what study practices and techniques are personally most effective; do what works for you; avoid experimenting with new and different practices (unless the old ones are clearly unhealthy – e.g., binge drinking;</p>

	<p>studying all night, etc.). For example: if you effectively study in particular environments, stick with what works; if you commonly take an evening study break by watching your favorite TV program, try to regularly take the time to watch it, etc.</p>
19.	<p>Listen to your body -- Do a <i>self-care body scan</i>: check in with yourself. Are you experiencing any aches, pains, or other discomfort? If so, your body may be telling you something, like get some exercise, eat something, cut down on the caffeine, take a time-out, or call a friend? Listen to your body!</p>
20.	<p>Structure, schedules, and monitoring -- Seek to develop regular daily habits and routines for activities that are repetitive (e.g., going to bed, getting up in morning; study times, meal times, social times, self-care times, zoning out times, etc.). Keep a simple log, journal, or calendar to monitor your success in maintaining the schedule and routine.</p> <p>Developing a regular daily schedule reduces the need to make minor or routine decisions and choices. This practice</p> <p>(1) preserves the brain’s energy for higher level tasks, like studying Torts, UCC, Con Law, etc.; and (2) also creates habits and structure that reinforce healthy bar prep practices and keeps you on track. Simple monitoring allows you to identify progress and identify areas where improvement is needed.</p>
21.	<p>Keep a to-do list – Keep a simple record of important matters needing to get done. Update it regularly so completed items can be deleted.</p> <p>Our minds tend to expend energy on items we need to get done. This is true even when we are not fully conscious of dwelling on these items. Once a to-do matter is written down (or otherwise recorded), our brains tend to expend less energy needlessly ruminating on it.</p>
22.	<p>Avoid relationship drama -- If you have personal relationships that are occasionally volatile, respectfully inform the other person that all your energies right now must be focused on your studies and self-care and you will not engage in any relationship drama – and stick to this rule. This is called <i>maintaining healthy boundaries</i>!</p>
23.	<p>Inspirational reading, dream, imagine, visualize success – Help your brain by doing things that encourage positive thinking.</p>
24.	<p>Do something you love – If there is an activity that you enjoy doing right now, make sure you do not lose that as part of your proactive self-care study strategy.</p>
25.	<p>Reach out for help: OAAP – If you have questions, concerns, or simply need to talk with someone, call or contact OAAP @ www.oaap.org; 503-226-1057</p>