

Release

You can't move forward if you've got something holding you back. Sometimes what you need is to let go of whatever's weighing you down—even if you don't quite know what it is. Here are feel-good ways to let go of physical and emotional stagnation.

Make Noise

Many Eastern and Western sacred traditions utilize the healing power of sound through chants, songs, hymns and mantras; but the science behind sound healing is solid. According to Sound Healer Tom Kenyon, the repetitive patterns of music and chant stimulate the reticular activating system in the brain, which can induce a mild, trancelike state. Making sounds and music is even more transformative than just listening.

"The way music helps us release is that it helps us remember a little bit more of who we are," advises soprano and Sound Shaman Norma Gentile,

from Ypsilanti, Michigan. Her favorite tip: Sing! Gentile exhorts, "Sing with the radio, with a choir or by yourself." When you sing, she explains, you breathe deeply and your body vibrates and releases energy. Just sing whatever moves you, from the medieval songs of Hildegard von Bingen (her favorite), to Country & Western ballads. She adds, "There's no style of music that can't be helpful and healing."

To release aches and pains, Kenyon applies a different exercise. First, find a quiet, private room where no one will hear you. Then, close your eyes and focus on a part of the body that feels uncomfortable: the lower back or neck, perhaps, or maybe a heavy heart or other emotional unease. Breathe in slowly. Exhale in an audible sigh, letting the sound come from the place of discomfort. Expressed sounds will be unique to each individual. Allow the sounds to build, reach a crescendo and then taper off naturally. "This is a simple, but powerful, technique for expressing tension with sound," promises Kenyon.

Brush it Out

"The skin is the largest organ in the body, and the better it functions as a toxin releaser, the less work the liver and kidneys have to do," explains Tom Sherman, a bodyworker who teaches at the Acupressure Institute. He suggests daily dry-brushing, a low-tech way to stimulate lymph nodes, open pores, release toxins and exfoliate the skin.

Any natural fiber bristle brush with a long handle will do, though Sherman prefers the Yerba Buena palm bristle brush. He also likes the Vital Chi Skin-Brushing system developed by Bruce Berkowsky (*NaturalHealthScience.com*). Dry-brushing is a popular spa treatment with European roots.

For basic skin-brushing, remove clothing and gently, but vigorously, rub the dry brush over every part of the body, using circular motions. The basic rule of thumb is to brush toward the heart and in the direction of blood flow. So, starting with the feet, brush in circles up the calves, thighs and buttocks, before moving to the hands and up the arms to the shoulders. Brush down on the neck, but up on the back. Finally, move to the chest and abdo-

men, brushing counter-clockwise. The whole process should take about 10 minutes. Follow it up with hydrotherapy—a simple shower will do—to help wash away dead skin and impurities. A further detoxing option is to follow up with a hot bath containing two cups of Epsom salts and 20 drops of tea tree oil.

