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DE-STRESS...

1 ...IN THE BEDROOM

Large studies have found people who have sex regularly report a host of health benefits, including raised immune function, lower mortality and a reduced risk of heart disease. It's often the last thing we feel like doing when we're stressed, but keeping that connection alive in a relationship does wonders for our sense of wellbeing and happiness; even a 'quickie' can make us feel better. Sex stimulates our bodies to produce hormones called prolactin and oxytocin, which are associated with improvements in mood and psychological bonding.

2 ...AT A FESTIVAL

For hunter-gatherers, dancing would have been performed as part of rituals and cultural celebrations and would have burned a massive 500 calories an hour. More importantly, we know that dancing not only improves fitness, it also reduces stress. In fact, it's also

been shown to improve memory, mood and cognitive (brain) functioning in the elderly and to help lower blood pressure. Tribal-style dancing, like Shamanic and 5 Rhythms, are great for recreating the ancient methods of group healing and free expression associated with a wide range of cultures.

3 ...ON A HIKE

A study in 2008 of groups hiking along the Appalachian Trail in the USA reported multiple benefits including physical challenge, self-fulfilment, warm relationships with others, and, of course, great exercise. Hikes can also be done silently, all or part of the way, to practice mindfulness with others. Removing the habit of experiencing what we see and feel as we walk, through discussion and comment, means we truly get to feel the landscape in all its glory.

Taken from *The De-Stress Effect* by Charlotte Watts (£12.99, Hay House)

