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Take the express train to the Land of Nod tonight. Let your mind drift toward a relaxing scene, like rolling ocean waves, a meandering river, or a field of flowers swaying in the wind. When you picture something soothing — whatever that means for you — you're more likely to fall asleep within 20 minutes than you are if you engage in the proverbial act of counting sheep. In fact, counting anything (sheep, stars, chocolate chips) can actually make it more difficult to fall asleep quickly. Because it's duller than watching paint dry, you'll lose interest before you are fully relaxed! In addition to picturing a bright pink sunset or a starry night to help you nod off, practice good sleep hygiene. That means turning off all electronics at least an hour before bedtime, making sure your room is cool (60 to 68 degrees Fahrenheit), and keeping the room dark or at least free of blue wavelength lights. Buy a red wavelength nightlight for the bathroom. Your bedroom and bathroom should be red light zones. Try it tonight: Let the sheep wander off and take a trip somewhere peaceful. *Bon voyage!*

By: Cleveland Clinic Wellness Editors

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You'll fall asleep faster if you picture relaxing images instead of counting all those noisy sheep.

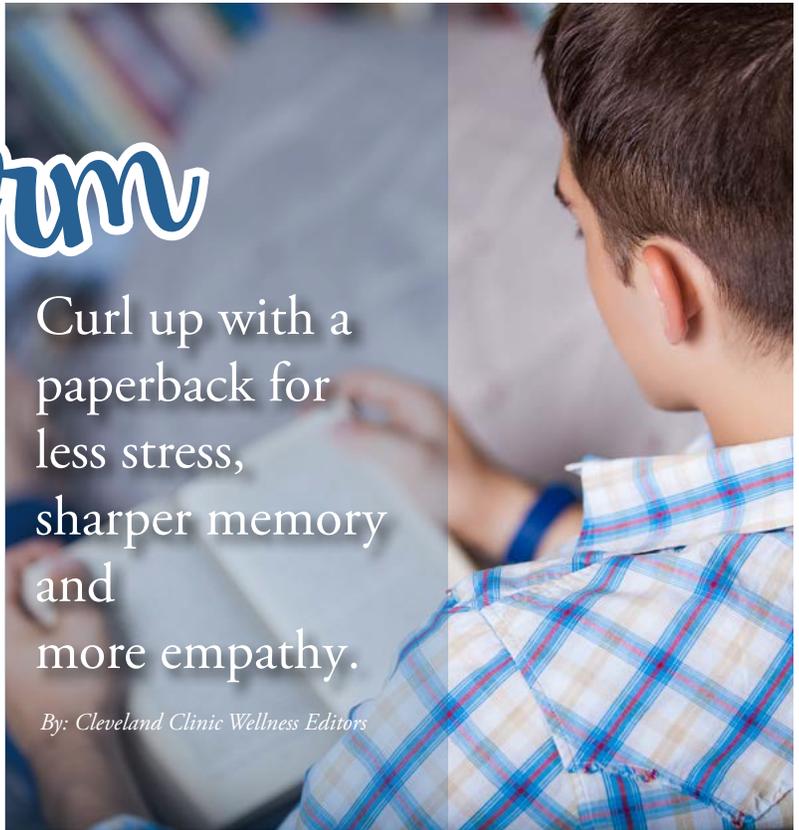


Be a Bookworm

After you go, go, go all day, take a little time to sit back, relax and enjoy a good book. Embracing your inner bookworm offers an escape from the rapid-fire world — a treat in and of itself — along with brain-building powers galore. Reading just about anything for as little as six minutes a day has been shown to reduce stress significantly. Don't stop there, though, as many of the benefits are cumulative and long-term. Reading throughout your life has been shown to protect against cognitive decline. To better recall what you've just read, forgo e-readers for good-old fashioned paper books — remember those? (It's a good sign if you do.) If you gravitate toward whodunits or history, you may want to mix things up with some literary fiction, whether classic or modern. Losing yourself in a novel can increase empathy and intuition, according to multiple studies. Now that's one for the books!

Curl up with a paperback for less stress, sharper memory and more empathy.

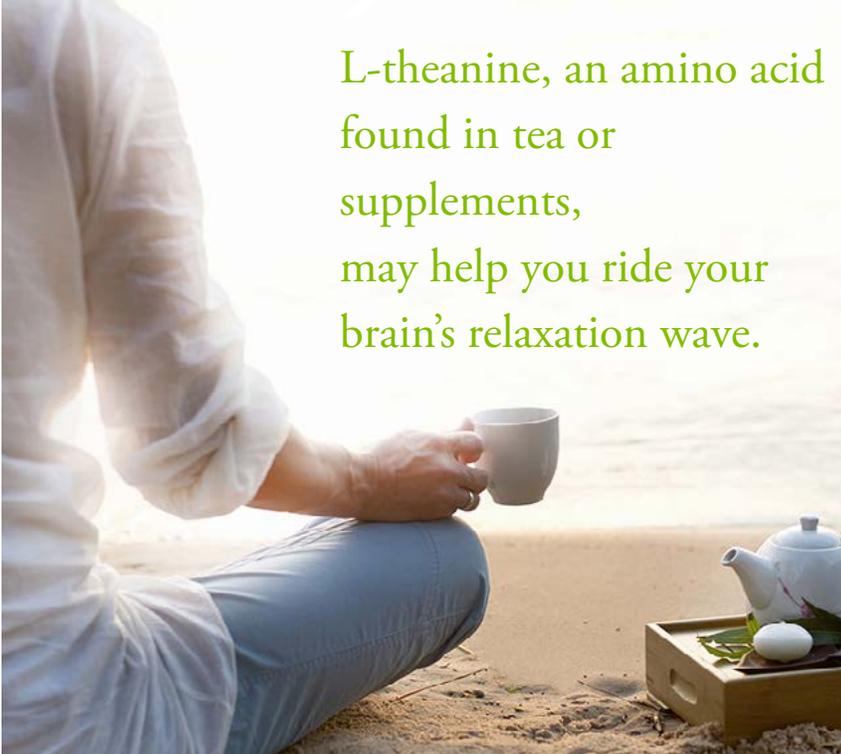
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Stay calm, cool and collected!

L-theanine, an amino acid found in tea or supplements, may help you ride your brain's relaxation wave.

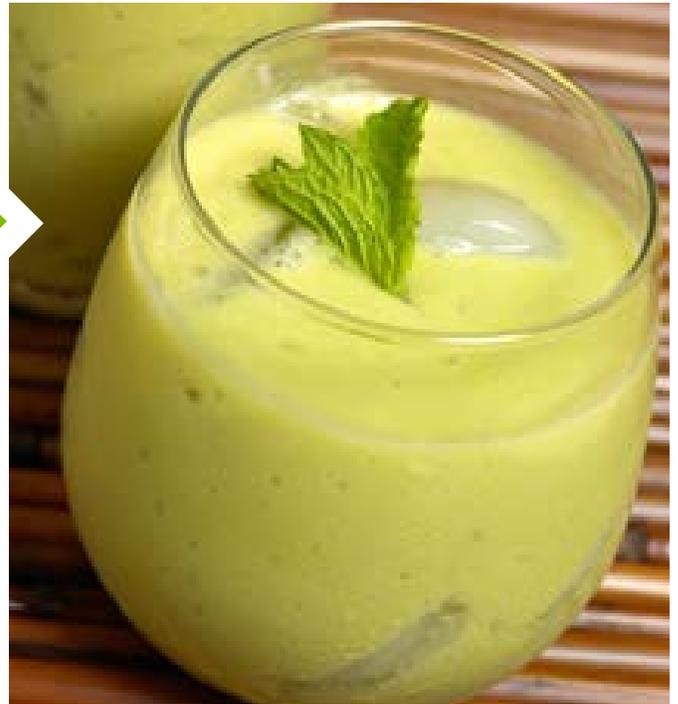
Alert, yet calm...it's the holy grail of mental states. Shifting from frazzled or sluggish to cool as a cucumber may be only a sip away. L-theanine, an amino acid found naturally in all varieties of tea, just might help to get you on the right wavelength, literally. Clinical trials have shown that l-theanine increases activity in your brain's alpha wavelength. This wave — there are five — is the one you want your brain to ride when you're awake, because it taps into your intuitive voice and encourages an attentive, relaxed, creative state. If you're feeling stressed or anxious, or having trouble focusing, try sipping on green or black tea rather than coffee, and see if you notice a difference. You can also try pure L-theanine — 200 to 400 mg once or twice daily — to help ease stress and improve your focus. Be sure it isn't blended with other supplements. Talk with your doctor first if you take blood pressure medicine since L-theanine lowers blood pressure.



Healthy Recipe: Green Dream Smoothie

This favorite smoothie recipe, packed with nutritious fruits and veggies, comes from Jim Perko with the Cleveland Clinic disease reversal program Lifestyle 180.

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Yield: 5 servings

Nutrition Info Per Serving:

80 calories, 0 g saturated fat, 15 mg sodium,
3 g fiber, 12 g sugars, 1 g protein, 0 g cholesterol,
19 g carbohydrates

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cleaned spinach leaves firm packed
- 1 cup cleaned kale, rough chop firm packed
- 1 cup green, seedless grapes
- 1 bartlett pear - core, stem, seeds removed
- 1 orange, peeled and quartered
- 1 banana
- 1 teaspoon chia seed
- 1/2 cup water
- 2 cups ice

Instructions:

1. Place all ingredients in blender and process on low speed for one minute, increase to medium-high and process until well-blended. Enjoy!

