

NURTURING WELLNESS:

A set of exercises to help ease stress and anxiety

zero  TO THRIVE 

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FIND A CALM MOMENT *with Four Square Breathing*



Find a quiet place where you won't be distracted. Sit upright and get comfortable. Close your eyes.

INHALE through the nose to a count of four. Lungs should be completely full of air.

HOLD the air in your lungs for a count of four.

EXHALE through the mouth to a count of four. All of the air should be out of the lungs.

HOLD the lungs in an empty state for a count of four.

Repeat for as long as you're able to, or for as long as you'd like.

FEEL CALM ALL OVER *with a Body Scan*

┃ Sit quietly or lie down. Close your eyes and breathe smoothly.

┃ Now think about the top of your head. In your mind, tell your body to release tension from your head.

┃ Next, turn your attention to your shoulders, then down your arms. Notice any areas of tension, then soften and relax.

┃ Continue with this through your body, working down through the toes. Feel the tension leaving your body, replacing it with a sense of peace and calm.

┃ When you are ready, bring yourself to the present moment. Wiggle your toes and fingers, open your eyes, and stretch out gently. Enjoy the sense of quiet and relaxation.



FIND YOUR CENTER *with a Grounding Exercise*

This can be especially useful in moments of extreme stress or intense emotion



Acknowledge **FIVE** things you see around you. It could be a pen, spot on the ceiling, anything in your surroundings.

Acknowledge **FOUR** things you can touch around you. It could be your hair, a pillow, or the ground under your feet.

Acknowledge **THREE** things you hear. This could be any external sound. Focus on things you can hear outside your body.

Acknowledge **TWO** things you can smell. If you need to take a brief walk to find a scent, you could smell soap in your bathroom, or nature outside.

Acknowledge **ONE** thing you can taste. What does the inside of your mouth taste like – gum, coffee, or the sandwich from lunch?

HAVE A MINDFUL S.N.A.C.K.

The next time you're feeling stressed out, overwhelmed, or unsure, reach for a moment of calm awareness: a mindfulness SNACK.

Here's how to do it:



STOP

Just stop whatever you're doing. Stopping means you begin again. You can always begin again.



NOTICE

What is happening within and around you?



ACCEPT

This is a tricky one. Whatever feelings you're struggling with (stress, kids, anger, sadness), accept it for what it is, without judgement.



CURIOUS

Ground yourself with questions about your experience and environment: What am I feeling? What do I need right now?



KINDNESS

Respond to yourself and others (mistakes and all) with kindness and observe how that helps things get back on track.

NURTURING AND REFUELING

*Caring for ourselves helps us to be ready and able to care for and nurture our children and those we love.
Here are some suggestions that might help during this difficult time:*



Accept your feelings. It's okay to be sad, mad, or scared.

Stay connected. It's important to stay connected to those we love and care about. You can call a friend or write a letter.

Take time to relax. Find things that help you feel calm. These might include prayer, mindfulness, a warm shower, looking out the window, reading, listening to music.

Practice gratitude. Jot down a note or make a list of things for which you are grateful.

Care for your body. Try to eat healthy, exercise, avoid drugs and alcohol, and get plenty of sleep.

Connect with beauty. Every day, try to experience something beautiful.

Find a way to connect with the center of your deepest self to re-awaken your sense of J.O.Y.

J: Just taking a moment. When things feel overwhelming, take a moment to be still. Take the time to notice your feelings, pause and reflect. Even just three slow deep breaths can bring a moment of calm into your day.

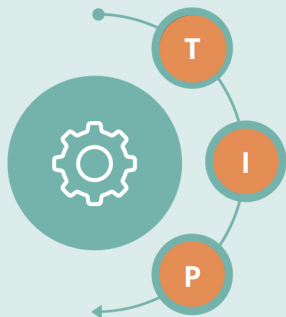
O: Observe the lights. Find the “light” in the midst of the “shadows.” What are the small things for which you are grateful? The taste of your morning coffee, the warm shower you had, the phone call you received from a friend... Remember how you felt when you experienced someone’s care and kindness.

Y: You can be the light. Remind yourself that you can be a source of light and kindness for others in the world. At a time when so much is out of our control, you can focus on the moments when you have made a difference—for your child, family or community. Reminding yourself of the ways you have helped others and spread kindness can help you feel more connected, and more peaceful.



TIP SKILLS: *Changing Your Body Chemistry*

To reduce intense emotions quickly, remember these TIP skills:



TIP THE TEMPERATURE of your face with COLD WATER* (to calm down fast)

- Holding your breath, put your face in a bowl of cold water, or hold a cold pack (or zip-lock bag of cold water) on your eyes and cheeks. Hold for 30 seconds.

INTENSE EXERCISE* (to calm down your body when it is revved up by emotion)

- Engage in intense exercise, if only for a short while.
- Expend your body's stored up physical energy by running, walking fast, jumping, playing basketball, lifting weights, etc.

PACED BREATHING (pace your breathing by slowing it down)

This can be paired with **MUSCLE RELAXATION** (see reverse side)

- Breathe deeply into your belly. Slow your pace of inhaling and exhaling way down (on average, five to six breaths per minute).
- Breathe out more slowly than you breathe in (for example, 5 counts in and 7 counts out).

PAIRED MUSCLE RELAXATION

to calm down by pairing muscle relaxation with breathing

- | While breathing into your belly, deeply tense your body muscles (not so much as to cause a cramp).
- | Notice the tension in your body.
- | While breathing out, say the word 'Relax' in your mind.
- | Let go of the tension.
- | Notice the difference in your body.

