

CALM YOUR MIND

STEP ONE - TAKING YOUR EMOTIONAL TEMPERATURE

The first step in managing your stress and anxiety is being able to take your emotional temperature so you know which of the tools you might need to use in any given moment. Your emotions are like an internal GPS, meaning that every emotion communicates a message and gives you valuable feedback, which is why it's really important to pay attention to them. Uncomfortable feelings like stress and anxiety, are your body's way of communicating that it perceives a threat in your environment. Whether or not the threat is real is another point entirely, but the message is there to protect you and keep you hyper vigilant. But not all emotions have the same intensity and it's important to know that you can turn your emotions up or down when you need to.

The next time you're feeling stressed, overwhelmed or anxious, I want you to rank the feeling for yourself on a scale from 1 to 10. With 1 being a slight concern and 10 being a full-blown panic attack. What's your current emotional temperature? How would you rank it?

STEP TWO - CHOOSE AN APPROPRIATE TOOL

If you ranked your stress and anxiety at a 1 to 5 level, then it's appropriate to use one of the mental tools to help you move through it.

If you ranked your stress and anxiety at a 6 to 10 level, then you need to focus on one of the physical tools. This is because when you're in a significant or amplified state of stress (6 or above), the emotional part of your brain is running the show and it cannot be reasoned with until you have physically calmed yourself and down-regulated your nervous system. It's the equivalent of trying to reason with a crying toddler. It won't work until you physically soothe and comfort them.

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PHYSICAL TOOLS

TOOL 1 - PHYSICAL TOUCH AND SELF-HAVENING

Physical touch is incredibly calming to the body. It produces oxytocin, which not only feels good but is responsible for a feeling of connection and trust. If you are with your family at the moment, increase the amount of physical touch - things like hugs and massage. If you're alone, self-compassion tools such as self-havening work just as effectively. This involves crossing your arms across your body and gently stroking the sides of your arms. Starting at the shoulders and moving downwards towards the elbows. You can learn more about self-havening here - <https://freshinsightcoaching.com/how-havening-works/>

TOOL 2 - FORWARD FOLDS

Forward folds are postures or movements that down-regulate your nervous system by slowing down your heart rate. Folding your body brings more of your body lower than your heart which means it doesn't need to work as hard to pump blood around the body. Some forward folds include - rag doll pose, touching your toes, child's pose, downward dog, forward folding at your desk and resting your head on your desk or in your lap.

TOOL 3 - DEEP BREATHING - EXTEND YOUR EXHALE

Extending the length of your exhale signifies to the body that you cannot be in danger because you have the time to breathe. This extended exhale switches on your parasympathetic nervous system which relaxes the body. Start by noticing the count of your natural breath cycle, then keep extending the length of your exhale until it becomes twice as long as your inhale.

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MENTAL TOOLS

TOOL 4 - DESIGNATE WORRY TIME

Rather than let your worries override your day and take up a lot of your energy, or trying to ignore or suppress them, allocate a specific time during your day where you will allow yourself to worry. Set your timer for 20mins and write down every worrying thought that you've had throughout the day. Getting them down on paper will actually calm down your brain and allow you to see that the situation is more manageable than you think.

TOOL 5 - RESILIENCE AFFIRMATION

Based on the work of Susan Jeffers and her idea that all of our fears and worries boil down to one main concern - that we won't be able to handle the situation. When your brain is worrying about all kinds of worst-case scenarios and what ifs, it's really worried that it won't be able to handle these things. This is where it's important to look for all of the evidence from your life of the times where you've been resilient. What are the things you've handled in the past? Use the affirmation - "I've handled it before, I'll handle it."

MY THOUGHTS AND WORRIES

THINGS I CAN CONTROL

THINGS I CAN'T CONTROL

