

Just Breathe...

Breathing often becomes shallow during times of stress. Deep, diaphragmatic breathing is restorative and is associated with rest and relaxation. To bring instant calm to your body and your mind, practice this technique:

1. Loosen any tight clothing around your waist. Lie down or sit comfortably with your eyes closed.
2. Place both hands over your belly button and breathe in slowly. Your belly should rise slightly as you inhale and fall as you exhale (while your chest remains relatively still). It may help to imagine a little balloon right behind your belly button that slowly fills with air as you inhale and slowly deflates as you exhale.
3. Try slowly counting from 1 to 4 in your head as you inhale, and then slowly counting down from 4 to 1 as you exhale.
4. Repeat for as many times as you need in order to feel refreshed. Remember:
Breathe IN → Belly OUT
Breathe OUT → Belly IN

*References:

Baker, D. & Stauth, C. (2003). *What happy people know: How the new science of happiness can change your life for the better*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.

Emmons, R.A. (2007). *Thanks! How the new science of gratitude can make you happier*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Lyubomirsky, S. (2007). *The how of happiness: A scientific approach to getting the life you want*. New York: The Penguin Press.

Schwartz, T. & McCarthy, C. (2007). Manage your energy, not your time. *Harvard Business Review* (October, 2007).

Campus Resources

Health Promotion Services:

Individual Stress Management – Meet with a Stress-less consultant to learn a variety of strategies to cope with stress

Stressbusters – Free 5-minute backrubs and wellness info at events on campus

Stressbusters Wellness App – Free on smartphones and available 24/7

Mental Health Services:

Therapy Groups and Workshops – throughout the year including DBT Skills Class, Dissertation Support Group, and Finding Your Center

Let's Talk – Brief, walk-in consultations with mental health providers (5 sites on campus)

TAO : Therapist Assisted Online – an interactive, web-based program that

provides strategies to help overcome anxiety, depression and other concerns

Individual Counseling – Meet one-on-one with a counselor for an evaluation

Psychiatry – Meet with a psychiatrist for an evaluation and to discuss medication options

For more info visit shs.wustl.edu and search key words or email wellness@wustl.edu

Student Health Services shs.wustl.edu

Lower level of Dardick House

South 40

314-935-6666

Zenker Wellness Suite

Sumers Rec Center

room 303

Build resilience to **STRESS**



and increase well-being

Health Promotion Services 2017-18



Habif Health and
Wellness Center

STUDENT AFFAIRS AT WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Strategies for Building Resilience to Stress

Keep Perspective

It can be easy to get so caught up in a stressful situation that you can't see things clearly. To regain your perspective—and activate your problem-solving abilities—try viewing the situation in a new way:

•Reverse View:

Ask yourself, “What would I tell my friend with this problem?” vs. the harsh things I am telling myself (i.e., you would never dream of telling your best friend “You can't handle this” or “You're totally going to fail” in response to their struggles, but may be saying these exact self-defeating things to yourself.

•Long View:

Ask, “How will I view this situation in a few months? A year? Several years?” or “Will this even matter in the grand scheme of my life?”

•Wide View:

Think of how you might expand your perspective to include seeing any possible benefits of your current struggle. Ask, “Regardless of the outcome of this situation, how can I learn and grow from it?” Resilience is a by-product of facing the stress, not avoiding it.

Build “Stress Muscles”

Keep in mind that stressful times are opportunities to build your “stress muscles”—opportunities to become more resilient. The old adage is true: “What doesn't kill you makes you stronger.” Ask: “How did I make it through a similar time?” “What did I learn then that can help me now?” “What did I do?” “Who helped me?”

Stay Positive...

...in your language AND your thoughts (“I can” or “I will get through this” vs. “There's no way” or “Nothing will help.”) Keep your focus on what you **can** accomplish—what is **reasonable in these circumstances**. Research shows that positive mood states are associated with better problem-solving and persistence as opposed to negative moods which are associated with rigid thinking and “giving up” behaviors.

End Procrastination!

Putting important things off can be a major contributor to stress. But contrary to what you might think, procrastinators are not lazy, they're usually very busy attending to a long list of tasks of varying importance—a classic procrastination technique! To break this habit, try the following:

•**The Most Important Thing:** Before going to bed each night, identify the **most important thing** that needs to be accomplished the next day, and then begin working on it **first** the next day (rather than leaving it for the end of the day when your energy starts to fade). Give this priority task a good 1-2 hours of uninterrupted attention (no texts, emails, phone calls), then take a break and evaluate if you need to keep working.

•**10-Minute Plan:** Tell yourself that you'll work 10 minutes on your task (set a timer if you want), then when the time is up, decide whether you want to work longer. This is a great way to “get started.”

Practice an “Attitude of Gratitude”

It is almost impossible to be in a state of worry and a state of active appreciation at the same time. Try the following exercises (found to be effective in many research studies*) the next time you find yourself worrying or ruminating:

•**3 Good Things:** Each night, reflect on your day and then write down 3 good things that happened (or that you were appreciative of/grateful for). It can be anything from the mundane to the profound. Then ask yourself, “Why did this good thing happen?”

•**Express Yourself!** Take time to thank someone else—verbally, in an email or text message, or in a hand written note. Grateful people are some of the happiest people in the world!

Simplify your Life

Less is more! Make a commitment to reduce the “busy-ness” of your life. Ask yourself the following questions:

“Where can I simplify?”

“What can I give up?”

“Do I spend way too much time on my phone/computer/etc?”

“Can I cut back on the number of meetings I attend (or at least the duration)?”

“Do I say ‘yes’ to activities to which I can say ‘no’?”

Be sure not to cut out things that bring you joy; these are the activities that make you more resilient to stress!