



Calming

Stress is a normal, functional part of life. As your body's natural response to perceived dangers, stress activates your Sympathetic Nervous System, to help you respond quickly and effectively. Unfortunately, prolonged stress can negatively impact your physical and mental health, including fatigue and poor performance.

When stressed, you might feel an elevated heart rate, rapid breathing, 'slowed time', sweating, muscle tension and other effects which help you make quick, instinctual decisions when your physical safety is at risk.

For students, often stressors are less physically threatening than emotionally, therefore it is helpful to learn skills for keeping your body and mind calm.

Start with this 'Parasympathetic Breathing' Exercise -

- Sit comfortably, close your eyes, focus on your breath.**
- Draw a slow, full inhale through your nose. (3-5 Seconds)**
- Pause for a moment with your lungs full. (2 Seconds)**
- Exhale as slowly as you can, letting only the smallest amount of air escape each moment. (8+ Seconds)**
- Repeat 3-5 times until you feel relaxed.**



Ways to Practice

Take regular breaks from stressful tasks. Aim for a 10 minute break every hour if possible.

Make a list of, and prioritize light, fun, calming activities like time with friends, hobbies, eating well, sleeping and exercise. Distract yourself from stress if needed and return when you feel calmer.

Try a 'Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)': These exercises guide you through the body one muscle group at a time, noticing any tension and releasing it. Try it before bed if you struggling to fall asleep! Search YouTube or your favorite Mindfulness App.

When you notice your body stress response is high - try this '5-Things Grounding' technique:

- Notice FIVE things you can see around you.**
- Notice FOUR things you can touch around you.**
- Notice THREE things you can hear.**
- Notice TWO things you can smell.**
- Notice ONE thing you can taste.**

Practice a calming mantra or 'affirmation,' such as 'I will get through this,' 'I can handle this,' or 'I will do the best I can.'

Comfort yourself viscerally with hot tea, pleasant scents, warm blankets, etc. Treat yourself to something you enjoy.