

## Self-Care Tips for Families

<h3>GROUNDING</h3> <p>Sit up straight, put your feet on the floor, focus on your breathing. Describe in detail 5 things you see around you. Go into as much or as little detail as you desire.</p>	<h3>BREATHE</h3> <p>Get into a comfortable position and close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose and imagine breathing in a calming color, such as light blue. Exhale through your mouth, imagine your anxiety exiting your body through a color, such as red. Repeat.</p>
<h3>CONFIRM</h3> <p>Say the follow things to yourself, out loud, &amp; repeat.  <i>I am safe. I am not in danger.          A panic attack cannot hurt me.          I am breathing in enough air.          I am beginning to calm down.          I am going to be okay.</i></p>	<h3>OUTSIDE</h3> <p>Go outside. As much as you don't want to, just go. Sit or stand and breathe in the fresh air. Look at the stars or the clouds and focus on them. Feel the warmth or coolness.</p>
<h3>OILS</h3> <p>Essential oils are a huge part of my anxiety coping. My personal favorites are: lavender, copaiba, cedarwood, frankincense, &amp; peace &amp; calming.</p>	<h3>SHOWER</h3> <p>If you're able, take a shower. This sounds trivial, but it's one of my favorite ways to come down from anxiety. Just trust me.</p>

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## SELF-CARE MENU

-  take a few deep breaths ..... 5 MINS
-  stretch your body ..... 5 MINS
-  listen to your favourite song ..... 5 MINS
-  meditate on your purpose ..... 15 MINS
-  read a chapter of a book ..... 15 MINS
-  journal out your thoughts ..... 15 MINS
-  take a walk outside ..... 30 MINS
-  get crafty ..... 30 MINS
-  cook a new recipe ..... 30 MINS

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## 6 Tips for Quick Stress Relief

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### Tip 1: Recognize when you're stressed

**Observe your muscles and insides.** Are your muscles tense or sore? Is your stomach tight, cramped, or aching? Are your hands or jaw clenched?

**Observe your breath.** Is your breathing shallow? Place one hand on your belly, the other on your chest. Watch your hands rise and fall with each breath. Notice when you breathe fully or when you “forget” to breathe.

### Tip 2: Identify your stress response

**Overexcited stress response:** If you tend to become angry, agitated, overly emotional, or keyed up under stress, you will respond best to stress relief activities that quiet you down.

**Under excited stress response:** If you tend to become depressed, withdrawn, or spaced out under stress, you will respond best to stress relief activities that are stimulating and energizing.

### Tip 3: Bring your senses to the rescue

To use your senses to quickly relieve stress, you first need to identify the sensory experiences that work best for you. This can require some experimentation. As you employ different senses, note how quickly your stress levels drop. And be as precise as possible. What is the specific kind of sound or type of movement that affects you the most? For example, if you're a music lover, listen to many different artists and types of music until you find the song that instantly lifts and relaxes you.

#### ***Sight***

Look at a cherished photo or a favorite memento. Use a plant or flowers to enliven your work space. Enjoy the beauty of nature: a garden, the beach, a park, or your own backyard. Surround yourself with colors that lift your spirits. Close your eyes and picture a place that feels peaceful and rejuvenating

#### ***Smell***

Light a scented candle or burn some incense. Experiment with different essential oils. Smell the roses or another type of flower. Enjoy clean, fresh air in the great outdoors. Spritz on your favorite perfume or cologne.

#### ***Touch***

Wrap yourself in a warm blanket. Pet a dog or cat. Hold a comforting object (a stuffed animal, a favorite memento). Give yourself a hand or neck massage. Wear clothing that feels soft against your skin.

## ***Taste***

Chew a piece of sugarless gum. Indulge in a small piece of dark chocolate. Sip a steaming cup of coffee or tea or a refreshing cold drink. Eat a perfectly ripe piece of fruit. Enjoy a healthy, crunchy snack (celery, carrots, or trail mix).

## ***Movement***

Run in place or jump up and down. Dance around. Stretch or roll your head in circles. Go for a short walk. Squeeze a rubbery stress ball.

## ***Sound***

Sing or hum a favorite tune. Listen to uplifting music. Tune in to the soundtrack of nature—crashing waves, the wind rustling the trees, birds singing. Buy a small fountain, so you can enjoy the soothing sound of running water in your home or office. Hang wind chimes near an open window.

### **Tip 4: Find sensory inspiration**

Having trouble identifying sensory techniques that work for you? Look for inspiration around you, from your sights as you go about your day to memories from your past.

### **Tip 5: Make quick stress relief a habit**

***Start small.*** Instead of testing your quick stress relief tools on a source of major stress, start with a predictable low-level source of stress, like cooking dinner at the end of a long day or sitting down to pay bills.

***Identify and Target.*** Think of just one low-level stressor that you know will occur several times a week, such as cooking. Vow to target that stressor with quick stress relief every time. After a few weeks, target a different stressor.

***Test-drive sensory input.*** If you are practicing quick stress relief on cooking light a scented candle one day, try music another day, and try a movement the next day. Keep experimenting until you find a clear winner.

***Have fun with the process.*** If something doesn't work, don't force it. Move on until you find what works best for you.

***Talk about it.*** Telling trusted friends, family members, and/or professionals about the stress-relief strategies you're trying out will help you integrate them into your life.

### **Tip 6: Practice wherever you are**

The best part of sensory-based strategies is the awareness that you have control. No matter where you are or what you're doing, quick stress relief is within arm's reach.

## Quick stress relief at home

***Kitchen.*** Ease kitchen stress by breathing in the scent of every ingredient. Delight in the delicate texture of an eggshell. Appreciate the weight of an onion.

***Children and relationships.*** Prevent losing your cool during a spousal spat by squeezing the tips of your thumb and forefinger together. When your toddler has a tantrum, rub lotion into your hands and breathe in the scent.

***Sleep.*** Too stressed to snooze? Try using a white noise machine for background sound or a humidifier with a diffuser for a light scent in the air.

***Creating a sanctuary.*** If clutter is upsetting, spend 10 minutes each day to tidy. Display photos and images that make you feel happy. Throw open the curtains and let in natural light.

## Quick stress relief at work Meetings.

During stressful sessions, stay connected to your breath. Massage the tips of your fingers. Wiggle your toes. Sip coffee.

***On the phone.*** Inhale something energizing, like lemon, ginger, peppermint. While talking, stand up or pace back and forth to burn off excess energy, or take calls outside when possible.

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## Apps to Try

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## *How to Support Children*

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- **Take time to talk with your child or teen about the COVID-19 outbreak.** Answer questions and [share facts about COVID-19 in a way that your child or teen can understand.](#)
- **Reassure your child or teen that they are safe.** Let them know it is ok if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- **Limit your family's exposure to news coverage of the event, including social media.** Children may misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.
- **Try to keep up with regular routines.** If schools are closed, create a schedule for learning activities and relaxing or fun activities.
- **Be a role model.** Take breaks, get plenty of sleep, exercise, and eat well. Connect with your friends and family members.
- **Stay in touch virtually.** Keep your support network strong, even when you're only able to call or text friends and family. Socializing plays an important role in regulating your mood and helping you stay grounded. And the same is true for your children.

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## *Calming Activities for Children*

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### **Breathing Exercises:**

Breathing exercises can help to remind your child to stop and count out deep breaths at a time of upset. You can also use visuals as a non-verbal reminder, posting them in a quiet area of the room or where the exercise is most likely to be practiced.

**Blowing Out Birthday Candles** – Have your child hold up one hand; their fingers are the “candles”. Count out the five “candles” together. Then blow out each “candle” with a long breath. Curl your finger down slowly while you are blowing.

**Blowing up Balloons** – Pretend to pull a balloon out of your pocket and encourage your child to do the same. Cup your hands together and hold them in front of your mouth. Take a deep breath and as you exhale slowly expand your hands as if inflating a balloon. When you are finished take a deep breath and slowly close your hands back together as you exhale to “deflate the balloon”. Repeat this five times.

### Physical Activities:

The following physical activities use the body to bring a sense of calm that can be instantly felt. Tensing and relaxing our muscles is a great way to relieve tension and stress.

**Sticky Hands** – Pretend to have “sticky” hands and then press them together. Now push hard for 20 seconds. You can count it out with your child. Now tell your child to slowly allow their hands to come apart and see if they can feel the stickiness. Repeat this sequence two or three times.

**Stretching** – Have your child do simple stretches such as touching their toes and reaching up to the sky on their tip toes. Have your child lie on their backs and make letters with their bodies. Try “X” (spread out their legs and arms) and “T”, (put their legs together while keeping their arms stretched out). Be creative and add your own! Remember to move slowly from stretch to stretch.

**Tense and Relax** – Have your child form their hands into fists and bring their shoulders to their ears. Count to five with them and then relax. Repeat five times. Try using props such as “squeeze balls” to help exaggerate the motion.

### Sensory Play:

Sensory play has a calming effect by allowing your child to focus on one sense (often touch) and “block out” others. Make sure to have sensory materials such as play dough, sand, or water available at all times. Other ideas include:

**Feeling Box** – Put together a variety of different materials to touch, such as felt, leather, smooth stone, feather, fur, etc.

**Listening Centre** – Have available calming music with headphones or quiet instruments such as a rain stick.

### Tips for Infants and Young Toddlers

For infants and young toddlers, having a soothing and responsive caregiver as well as a calming environment increases the young child’s ability to handle stress and begin to self-regulate emotions. The following may help calm a young child:

**Motion** – Rocking, walking, dancing or using swings can help a child to breathe more regularly.

**Music** – Calm, quiet music, either sung or played can help soothe a child.

**Changing position** – The way that you hold or carry can help calm a very young child. Try changing positions and to see how a child will respond.

**Reduce Stimulation** – Try dimming the lights and reducing the amount of noise in the room.

## References

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/quick-stress-relief.htm>

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