

# Managing Stress: For Yourself and Your Family

Remember stress is a physical response, and you have the tools to manage it.

Quick resets: simple mindfulness techniques like deep cleansing breathes, tracing your hand and breathing, standing up and shaking out muscle tension

- Make your own stress thermometer so you have a visual cue to help you take control
- Learn to recognize the signs/symptoms that you are feeling stressed; identify things you can change – and change them! and also accept what you can't control; practice more positive thinking; find your emotional reset switch using techniques like this:

Practice STOP:

**S**top what you're doing

**T**ake a pause

**O**bserve with a mindful moment to reset your perspective

**P**roceed with more peace of mind

## Quick Stress Resets

When your stress response is triggered, take a sip of water, press against a wall, or try a quick walk while paying close attention to your physical sensations. When drinking a sip of water, try to feel every droplet of water in their mouth. How does it feel as it passes over the lips? Is it cool or warm? Does it have texture? This process of closely examining sensory details called **sensing-in** is similar to mindfulness practices. After you focus on all of the sort of sensory elements of the sip, then the brain can come back, calmer. Try these resets to find what works best for you. Find one that you're comfortable with and practice it, paying attention to how your body responds. You'll know what to look for when you use the reset for real.

- ▶ Take a deep breath: close your eyes, breathe in through your nose, fill your belly fill with air, relax your shoulders and slowly exhale through your mouth, focusing on the sensation and feeling your belly contract. Sit quietly for a moment of two more.
- ▶ 5 Finger Exercise: Stretch out your fingers on one hand. With your other hand, slowly trace around your thumb. Breathe in as you trace up one side of the thumb, and breathe out as you trace down the other side. Do the same for the other four fingers, tracing up and breathing in, tracing down and breathing out.
- ▶ Stand up, raise your hands above your head and shake it ALL out.
- ▶ Follow [The Calming Sphere](#) on Twitter etc..
- ▶ Feel like you're going burst? If you're with someone, tell them you need to take a moment to reset your head; walk out of the room to gather yourself. It's good to name what you are feeling.
- ▶ Feel grounded (literally); focus on what the ground feels like under your feet or what the seat of the chair feels like.
- ▶ Check out these [Five Minute Stress Resets](#) from the New York Times.
- ▶ Is there a meme that makes you laugh? Find it and share it.
- ▶ Listen to music; maybe have a spontaneous dance party with your family
- ▶ Get outside, whatever the weather, and take a walk. Start off walking very fast and then deliberately slow your pace
- ▶ Splash your face with cold water.

## Next Steps

### Build your reservoir of positive activities:

- Do and feel things that make you feel good and, whenever possible, try not to focus on worries.
- Short term: Don't avoid or procrastinate doing those things that you don't want to face. Putting them off creates additional anxiety and stress.
- Set goals for yourself related to what you value. Make these things that you **can** accomplish.
- Pick one of the goals and make a plan with achievable action steps. Include a way to measure and keep track of your progress.
- Get to work! Start immediately on the first action step.
- Give yourself credit for each action step and share your success. Celebrate the accomplishment of your goal.
- Repeat.
- Reflect on how your achievement impacts your emotional well-being and regulation. You're building a kind of mental muscle that supports emotional resiliency.

## Get Happier: 5 Goals to Keep in Mind

Psychologies Laurie Santos (who teaches the free Coursera course *The Science of Well-Being*) keeps it simple, [read this article](#) for more detail:

- Get social
- Give thanks
- Be in the Moment
- Rest and Move
- Be Kind

## Helpful Resources

Are you worried about your child? The Child Mind Institute's [Symptom Checker](#) is an online resource that can help you support your child. FYI [The Child Mind Institute](#) is a trusted source for help in navigating the challenges of parenting.

[How to Avoid Passing Anxiety on to Your Kids: Help yourself, and them, by learning techniques to manage stress in a healthy way](#), also from The Child Mind Institute.

From **the New York Times**: [Your Brain Is Not for Thinking](#) In stressful times, this surprising lesson from neuroscience may help to lessen your anxieties.

Can't seem to put down your phone? Make it a positive: try a mental health or mindfulness App to help find peace of mind. Here's a [website](#) that gives you some options.

[Share some of these resets found here with your family.](#)

[Simple Strategies to Stay Calm](#): watch these short videos to learn more rapid reset techniques with your family to help everyone calm down.

Go to [spenj.org](http://spenj.org) for more resources on mindfulness, emotional regulation, managing conflict and other related topics to help you be a better parent.