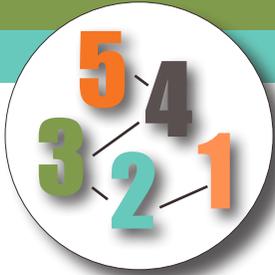


## FEELING STRESSED?

# Try one of these “BREATHERS”



### 5 - 4 - 3 - 2 - 1

**What are 5 things you can see?**

Look for small details such as a pattern on the ceiling, the way light reflects off a surface or an object you never noticed.

**What are 4 things you can feel?**

Notice the sensation of clothing on your body, the sun on your skin or the feeling of the chair you are sitting in. Pick up an object and examine its weight, texture and other physical qualities.

**What are 3 things you can hear?**

Pay special attention to the sounds your mind has tuned out, such as a ticking clock, distant traffic or trees blowing in the wind.

**What are 2 things you can smell?**

Try to notice smells in the air around you, like an air freshener or freshly mowed grass. You may also look around for something that has scent, such as a flower or an unlit candle.

**What is 1 thing you can taste?**

Carry gum, candy or small snacks for this step. Pop one in your mouth and focus your attention closely on the flavors.

**Why does this help?** Deliberately focusing on your external world by tapping into your 5 senses helps ground you in the present and allows for richer, fuller experiences.



### Balloon Breathing

**Directions:** Place your hands on your stomach. Imagine a balloon in your stomach. Each time you breathe in, imagine the balloon being blown up, expanding in your stomach. Notice your hands rise as your stomach fills. When you exhale, imagine the balloon emptying. Notice your hands fall as your stomach empties. Repeat this pattern several times, filling and emptying the imaginary balloon in your stomach.

**Why does this help?** Deliberately taking slow and deep breathes triggers a relaxation response. When taking deep breaths, our bodies are better able to exchange carbon dioxide for oxygen, which results in a slower heart rate, lower blood pressure and, consequently, a feeling of relaxation.



### Starfish

**Directions:** Imagine your body as a starfish. Extend your arms, legs, fingers and toes to their most expansive position. Be careful not to add tension to your body – this is an opening exercise, not a stretch. Stand (or lay) in this position for 5 minutes. It can be helpful to pair this open posture with deep breathing.

**Why does this help?** When animals are under a state of distress they curl up and close their body to protect their vital organs from threatening predators. Expanding your body in this “star” position involves physically opening up the body, which sends signals to the brain that we are safe and don’t need to engage in fight or flight reactions.

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