

# INTENTIONAL STRESS RESPONSES & PREVENTION



## complete your stress cycle

After stress or just after your most stressful activity of the day be sure to complete your body's stress cycle.

- movement like a run or walk or dancing
- full 20-second hug
- prioritize a full night's sleep
- mindful breathing for 5 minutes
- laughter (find a funny meme)



## daily movement

Regular exercise and movement contributes to improved sleep and a resilient stress response.

If you sit often, add extra walking and short breaks for movement into your day.

## train your vagus nerve

Toning your vagus nerve improves your stress response. Try:

- scalp massage
- cold exposure (ice or cold shower)
- laughter, humming, or singing
- extra long exhales
- decompressing by straightening your upper back and overall posture
- a weighted blanket for a hug-like effect

## build mindfulness

- before getting out of bed, try doing a full **body scan**
- schedule mindful **pauses** to check-in with your emotions
- design a mindful morning **ritual** just for you, which can be simple, like sitting by a window with tea
- do only one task at a time
- find a new breathwork practice online and pause to breathe each day
- practice a walking or sitting **meditation**
- go outside in **nature** and label your experience with every sense you can



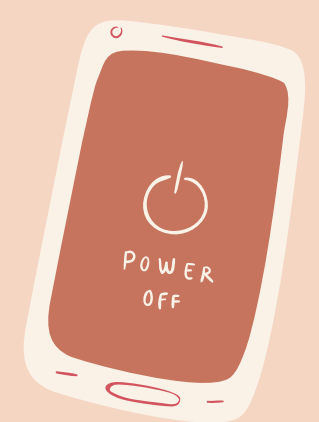
## release tension

- intentionally relax your muscles, especially your shoulders and jaw
- **deepen** and expand your breathing
- stretch tense or tight areas in your body
- gently hang your head over the side of a couch or bed to **release** your back and neck for a minute
- **gently tap** your pressure points in this order: temples, eyebrow, cheek, chin, chest, upper armpit, and then wrists

## supportive apps

Intentionally use apps that support your emotional wellness.

Try Insight Timer, Calm, Headspace, or How We Feel, and turn off your phone when it isn't needed.



## co-regulate emotions

- **breathe together** while holding hands or sitting back to back
- full 20-second hug
- ask a safe person to intentionally tune in to you and intentionally **shift your focus** to a new topic
- if you spend lots of time on isolated tasks like scrolling on your phone, then switch it up by **reaching out** to share how you feel with a loved one

# EMOTIONAL REGULATION & SELF CHECK-INS

## identify your cues

We all have unique cues that help us know we are dysregulated. Ask yourself... what are the early signs? Some examples are:

- your jaw feels tense
- you feel stuck scrolling on your phone
- you feel restless, irritable, or spaced out
- sounds become overwhelming
- you dismiss or tune out others



## tune into your body

- **let out a long sigh** and notice how deep your next inhale is
- **notice** your posture (tense, hunched, relaxed, upright)
- **name** an anchor, internal or external, that feels safe to your body (a texture, music, sensation of warmth, etc)
- **map** any tightness in your body, checking each area from head/neck/jaw to legs and feet
- **notice** your breathing and heart rate



## reduce resistance

- **resistance** can increase a sensation or the length of time you experience an emotion
- **stay as curious** and nonjudgemental as possible about your energy, thoughts, and sensations
- **pause** before rejecting a feeling; give it space to be heard
- every emotion can be a **signal** to tune into, so if you do not have time to tune in, set aside time to check-in later
- use a Feelings Wheel or How We Feel app to **identify** the emotion if needed

## check-in 3 times

Set a timer that goes off 3x/day



- each time take a 1-minute pause
- score your energy level from 1 to 10
- name your top two emotions out loud

## map your energy

- what is your energy from 0 to 10?
- how can you adjust your plans to fit your energy level today?
- what can you say out loud so others know what energy you can or cannot give?
- what actions give you the most energy?
- what reduces your tolerance or energy?



## name glimmers

- glimmers are the opposite of triggers, that is, they are micro-moments or anchors that bring a sense of calm
- examples: a soft breeze, a cozy fire, a compliment, or a photo of your pet
- what cues a sense of wellbeing for you or brings your state of mind to a calm point of focus?

## interrupt the build-up

- give yourself **permission** to take breaks
- go **outside** in the fresh air for 15-minutes
- take a quick **stretch** break
- **practice** bilateral stimulation, which is simply passing an object side to side in your hands to activate each side of your brain. you can do this while talking through your emotions too
- shake, jump, **move** - imagine you could shake off your current energy