

Calm **IN YOUR POCKET**

**Tools to calm your mind
when in distress**

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Hello, friend!

Let's get calm.

This workbook, **Calm in Your Pocket**, is here to help you acquire tools to calm your mind, especially in a world that often ignores, dismisses, or trivializes our mental health needs. We live in a world where we need to fight for our basic human rights. This can often leave us feeling angry, anxious, powerless, and like nothing will ever change.

This workbook isn't about solving those big, systemic issues right away. Before you can effectively process your feelings, figure out what's in your power to change, or decide where to put your precious energy, you need to find a place of **inner calm**.

Our immediate goal, with these techniques, is simple: to help you feel less anxious, less angry, less sad, and less frustrated. It's about finding that steady ground so you can breathe, think, and eventually, move forward with more clarity and strength.

Your body's inner pilot: the Autonomic Nervous System

Your body has this incredible, inner pilot called the **Autonomic Nervous System (ANS)**. Think of it as the network of nerves that silently handles all your unconscious, "autopilot" tasks. It handles everything from your breathing and heart rate, to digesting your lunch, and how your body responds when you hear music.

The ANS has two main branches, each with very distinct jobs: the **Sympathetic Nervous System (SNS)** and the **Parasympathetic Nervous System (PSNS)**. When you're facing stress, danger, or even just something that gets your adrenaline pumping, the SNS kicks in. It prepares your body for intense physical activity, enabling you to respond to a threat. The SNS is responsible for the four responses when you're under pressure: fight, flight, freeze, or fawn.

On the flip side, we have the PSNS, your body's built-in regenerative system. It is designed to counteract stress and bring things back to normal. It's responsible for promoting calmness, relaxation, and helping your body conserve and restore energy.

All the techniques in this workbook are specifically designed to gently nudge and activate your PSNS. Since stress is primarily activated by the SNS, we definitely need the PSNS to step in and counterbalance its effects, helping you dial down the distress.

15 ways to calm

We've prepared a variety of techniques that you can put in your pocket to help. They can help in immediately minimizing pain and emotional distress when you find yourself in a state of heightened anxiety, anger, or frustration.

We hope all of them are easy to follow, so you can pick and choose what works for you anytime you need them. You can do one or as many as you need, even several times a day. **Make sure you find a safe and comfortable space and position where you can relax and feel secure before starting on any of the techniques.** Try to observe and examine your feelings, emotions, and thoughts before and after following the technique to see which ones are more helpful for you and which you enjoy doing!

This list is not meant to be comprehensive. If we list everything, it won't fit in your pocket! However, we compiled a list of techniques that have most helped us and have a scientific basis. If you would like to learn more about the techniques, we have also provided references for you to study the methods in more detail.

Good luck
and hang in there!



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Breathing

Have you ever noticed how your breathing changes when you are upset? Your breath often gets short, shallow, and up in your chest. Do you also notice how, once you control your breathing to be calm and steady, your feelings become more relaxed as well?

There are many different ways to breathe to calm yourself. One way is diaphragmatic breathing, also known as belly breathing, which teaches your body to breathe deeply and fully, sending a signal to your brain to relax.

Why is this helpful?

When you breathe deeply into your belly, you engage your diaphragm, which in turn stimulates your vagus nerve (a major nerve of the PSNS). This sends signals to your brain that help you relax. It can also improve focus and reduce physical tension.

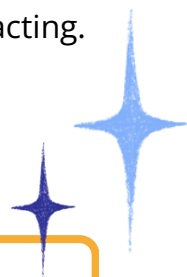
Instructions:

1. **Relax:** Notice the muscles on your shoulders and relax them. Shift them downward away from the ears.
2. **Breathe and be present:**
 - a. **Feel:** Put a hand on your chest and a hand on your stomach.
 - b. **Inhale:** Without straining or pushing, breathe in through your nose until you can't take in any more air. Feel the air moving through your nostrils into your abdomen, expanding your stomach and sides of the waist. Let your chest remain relatively still.
 - c. **Exhale:** Tightly bring your lips together, as if sipping through a straw. Exhale slowly through your lips for 4 seconds and feel your stomach gently contracting.
3. **Repeat:** Repeat these steps several times for best results.



Tip

When you inhale, push your belly out like a balloon. When you exhale, let it sink back in. Keep your chest still.



References:

Hamasaki, H. "Effects of Diaphragmatic Breathing on Health: A Narrative Review." National Institute of Health (NIH). Oct 15 2020.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7602530/>

Ma, Xiao, Zi-Qi Yue, Zhu-Quin Gong et al. "The Effect of Diaphragmatic Breathing on Attention, Negative Affect and Stress in Healthy Adults." National Institute of Health (NIH). June 6, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00874>



When we have anxious thoughts, it's usually because we're worried about the future. Sometimes it helps to redirect and be mindful of what's happening in the present moment instead. We find it's easier to do this by using our senses to interpret our current state. This activity is also commonly referred to as the "5-4-3-2-1 grounding technique."

Why is this helpful?

This works by intentionally pulling your focus to engage your senses. This way, you get distracted from your distressing thoughts and feelings. This technique brings you back to the present moment and gently reminds you to be mindful and that you are safe here and now.

Tip

Try to enhance your sensory experience by lingering and fully experiencing those items. If you named one item you can see, try keeping your gaze there and notice all the details of that item.

Instructions:

1. **5 things you can see:** Start by looking around you and naming five things you can see. It can be your shirt, a picture frame, a light bulb, or a piece of furniture.
2. **4 things you can touch:** Find four things you can touch and feel. It can be your hair, the texture of your shirt, the texture of the ground/floor, or the feeling of the fabric on a chair.
3. **3 things you can hear:** Listen for three things you can hear. It can be the hum of the fan, the sound of the television, the birds chirping, or the clock ticking.
4. **2 things you can smell:** Identify two things that you smell. It can be coffee that's being brewed, the food that's cooking, or the smell of perfume.
5. **1 thing you can taste:** Name one thing you can taste. It can be the lingering taste of what you ate earlier, the minty flavor of your toothpaste, or the sweetness of a candy.



References:

Finck, Carolyn, Alba Avila, William Jimenez-Real et al. "A multisensory mindfulness experience: exploring the promotion of sensory awareness as a mindfulness practice." *Frontiers frontiersin.org*. Nov 9, 2023.
<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1230832/full>

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<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02012/full>



Tapping

Do you ever feel like you're unaware of many things just because you're anxious? Tapping allows a person to focus on something other than their anxiety. This can help a person calm down enough so that the anxiety is not overwhelming.



Why is this helpful?

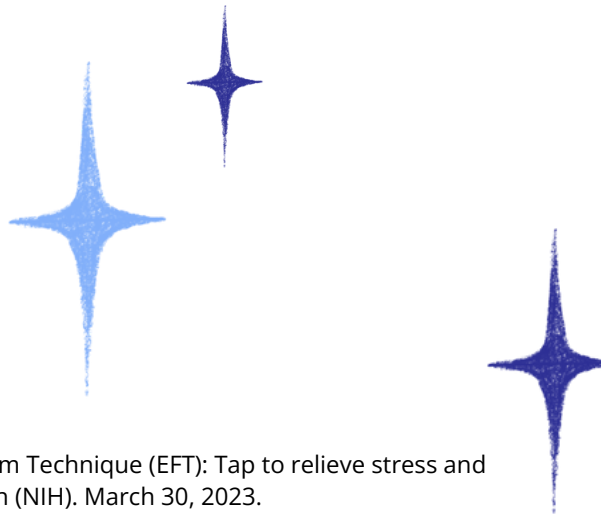
When some people are anxious, some don't know what to do with their hands. Tapping is a way to get them to focus their extra energy on something else.

Tip

Try to put some pressure on your tapping. It can be heavier than a soft touch.

Instructions:

1. **Tap your body:** Using your 3 middle fingers, tap each body part seven times, moving around the body in this order:
 - a. The side of your hand
 - b. The inside of your eyebrow, where the hair of your eyebrow starts
 - c. The side of your eye
 - d. The area just under your eye
 - e. The area under your nose
 - f. The area between your bottom lip and chin
 - g. Roughly two inches below your collarbone
 - h. The side of your body, at the top of your ribcage
 - i. The top of your head
2. **Repeat:** Repeat these steps as needed.



References:


Blacher S. (2023). "Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT): Tap to relieve stress and burnout". National Institute of Health (NIH). March 30, 2023.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/36687311/>

Clond, Morgan. "Emotional Freedom Techniques for Anxiety: A Systematic Review With Meta-analysis." National Institutes of Health (NIH). May, 2016.
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Self- MASSAGING

When we become stressed or anxious, our bodies often tense up without us even realizing it. Our shoulders tense up, our jaw clenches, and we hold tension everywhere. Self-massage involves using your own hands to physically release tension, a practice that can help relieve pain, reduce stress, and improve overall well-being.



For this technique, we focus on foot massage, as the feet, neck, and head are the best places for self-massage. These three areas are all easy to reach and don't require too much pressure, making them easy to massage with your hands.



Why is this helpful?

By physically releasing muscle tension, you help break the stress cycle, making yourself feel more grounded, relaxed, and less overwhelmed.

Instructions:

1. **Get in the right position:** Sit on the floor or on a comfortable chair. Bend your left leg and rest your left foot gently on your right thigh.
2. **Massage:** Gently massage your whole foot including the toes, arch, and heel.
3. **Go deeper:** Press the knuckles of your right hand into your left foot. Knead your foot as you would bread dough. Or work the skin and muscles by holding a foot with both hands and pressing your thumbs into the skin.
4. **Spread your toes:** Using your hands, gently pull the toes back and forth, and also apart. This stretches the muscles underneath.
5. **Repeat:** Repeat on the other foot.



Tip

Experiment with the different kinds of touch to give and receive (hard, soft, fast, slow, up and down, circular). What you discover may surprise - and delight - you!



References:

Meier, Maria, Eva Unternaehrer, Stephanie J Dimitroff et al. "Standardized massage interventions as protocols for the induction of psychophysiological relaxation in the laboratory" National Institutes of Health (NIH). Sept. 8, 2020. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32901072/>

Nd. (University of Konstanz) "Ten minutes of massage or rest will help your body fight stress." ScienceDaily sciencedaily.com. Sept 18, 2020. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2020/09/200918104305.htm>



Progressive MUSCLE RELAXATION

Does your body tense up when you're stressed, even without you realizing it? Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) teaches you to intentionally tense and then relax different muscle groups throughout your body. It allows us to truly let go and systematically relax our bodies.

Why is this helpful?

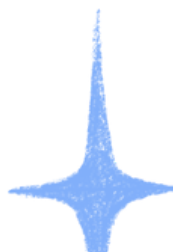
PMR directly addresses the physical tension that often accompanies stress and anxiety. Through this technique, you become more aware of the difference between a tense and a relaxed state. When you can train your body to relax on command, your mind often follows, becoming more relaxed and less anxious.

Tip

Notice the tension of each muscle group before relaxing so that the sense of relaxation in the area is emphasized. Feel the difference!

Instructions:

1. **Choose the order:** You can do PMR in 2 ways, top-down (from your head to your feet, for example: face, neck, shoulders, arms, hands, stomach, thighs, lower legs, feet) or bottom-up (from your feet to your head). Decide on what is more comfortable for you.
2. **Tense and release:**
 - a. **Tense:** For 5 seconds, tense your muscles in your starting area tightly but without causing pain. Feel that tension.
 - b. **Release:** For 15-20 seconds, completely release the tension. Progressively release the tension, slowly letting the tightness drain away. Focus on the feeling of relaxation.
 - c. **Breathe:** Throughout the process, keep breathing slowly and deeply. Notice the difference between tension and relaxation.
3. **Go through your body:** Move onto a different area based on the order you chose. If you started with your feet, curl your toes or stretch them then release. On your stomach, harden your stomach then release. On your shoulders, shrug your shoulders up towards your ears then release down. On your head, tighten your jaw or wrinkle your nose then release.
4. **Repeat as necessary:** Repeat throughout your body until you acquire complete relaxation.



References:

Syazwina, Muhammad Khir, Wan Mohd Azam, Wan Mohd Yunus et al. "Efficacy of Progressive Muscle Relaxation in Adults for Stress, Anxiety, and Depression: A Systematic Review." National Institutes of Health (NIH). February 1, 2024. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/38322293/>

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When you're stressed, you sometimes get the feeling that you're stuck. The best antidote can simply be to get your body moving. Humans have a primary drive to move. Begin with gentle, purposeful movements, such as walking, stretching, or tackling a few chores. The good thing about moving our bodies is that we don't have to learn to do it! It is an accessible coping mechanism for individuals of all abilities, mobility ranges, and fitness levels.

Why is this helpful?

Simple physical movements, such as walking or stretching, help release stored tension in your muscles. The rhythmic and repetitive nature of walking, stretching, or doing chores like wiping the kitchen counter can be incredibly grounding and meditative. This can be a good, healthy distraction from overwhelming and anxious thoughts. Knowing that you can do something for yourself can also boost your self-esteem.

Instructions:



1. **Do any movement:** Try one of the following:
 - a. **Go for a walk:** Step outside if you can, even if it's just down the block. If you can't go outdoors, walk laps inside your room or home.
 - b. **Stretch your body:** Gently reach up towards the sky, touch your toes, or roll your shoulders. Hold each stretch for a few seconds.
 - c. **Shake it out:** Stand up and gently shake your hands, arms, and legs.
 - d. **March in place:** If space is limited, simply march in place. You can also try lifting your knees higher and swinging your arms.
 - e. **Tackle a small chore:** Pick a small repetitive task that's easy to do for you. You can wipe the kitchen counter, wash some dishes, or fold the laundry.
2. **Be present:** Focus on the rhythm of your movement, how your feet feel on the ground, and your breathing. Breathe in an even and relaxed manner and pay attention to what you sense. Notice the way the air smells or feels on your skin, the scent of the soap or dishwashing liquid, or the different things you see during your walk. This helps pull you into the present moment.



Tip

Make movement fun! Getting your body moving - even if it's a chore - helps!

References:

Brand, Ralf and Boris Cheval. "Theories to Explain Exercise Motivation and Physical Inactivity: Ways of Expanding Our Current Theoretical Perspective." Frontiers frontiersin.org. May 21, 2019.

<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.01147/full>

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<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1134049/full>





WORRIES

Visualizing

When we're in emotional distress, it can be caused by a negative thought or belief, and it spirals from there. In this technique, we try to visualize the negative thought and imagine it drifting away or being blown away.



Why is this helpful?

This technique helps you see the negative thought as something separate from yourself. When you distance yourself from your thoughts, you can observe them better. You can remind yourself that thoughts are just thoughts, not necessarily facts or commands.

Tip

If you know of a place that really relaxes you or a place that you love, try visualizing that place. It could help make you feel better.

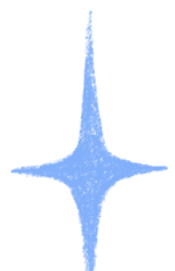
Instructions:

1. **Close your eyes and imagine:** Try one of the following:
 - a. Imagine the negative thoughts as written words on clouds. Some clouds can be big and dark, while others can be thin and wispy. Watch as they one by one slowly drift away until they are so far from you that you can no longer see the words.
 - b. Imagine the negative thoughts as written words on dry sand. Watch as the wind slowly blows the sand away and the words slowly disappear one by one into the wind.
 - c. Imagine they negative thoughts as written words on the beach. Watch the words slowly get dragged by the seawater away from the shore as they one by one disappear into the water.
2. **Open your eyes:** Slowly open your eyes. If new thoughts appear, just repeat and visualize them disappearing.
3. **Be kind to yourself:** If some thoughts keep appearing, be kind to yourself and accept that it takes time. Imagine it disappear at a much slower pace and be patient.

References:

Bell, Imogen, Wolfgang Marx, Katherine Nguyen, Sally Grace, John Gleeson and Mario Alvarez-Jimenez. "The effect of psychological treatment on repetitive negative thinking in youth depression and anxiety: a meta-analysis and meta-regression." National Institutes of Health (NIH). November 14, 2022.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9875014/>

Pietromonaco, P R and H Markus. "The nature of negative thoughts in depression." National Institutes of Health (NIH). March, 1985.
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/3989670/>



Repeating A MANTRA

We can be our harshest critic. During times of distress and anxiety, we forget that we are human and are worthy of good things like love, respect, and happiness. For this technique, we will try to develop our own mantra that will let us remember that we are worthy of good things.

Why is this helpful?

Repeating positive affirmations about ourselves helps distract us from overwhelming negative thoughts and reminds us of more positive ones. It can also boost your self-esteem and confidence. The shift in perspective can also lead to a reduction in feelings of stress and anxiety, allowing you to maintain a more optimistic outlook.

Tip

When choosing a mantra, try imagining what a friend who loves you would say to you instead to make you feel better. What would they say? You can also imagine what you would say if your dear friend is having a tough time. What would you say?

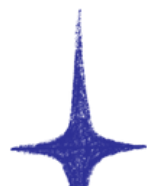
Instructions:

1. **Think positive:** Try to think of ways you can reassure yourself or challenge these negative thoughts. Ask yourself: Is this actually true? Can I look at this situation another way? Don't stress too much at this part, if you can't spin it positively, just proceed to the next step.
2. **Pick a mantra:** Choose one that resonates with you and your current situation. You can develop your own mantra, or you can choose one from the list below:
 - a. "Even though I feel _____, I love and accept myself anyway."
 - b. "I am worthy of love and respect."
 - c. "I am strong, powerful, and resilient."
 - d. "I am enough, exactly as I am."
 - e. "Even though I feel _____, I will learn and grow from this."
 - f. "I am open to new experiences, opportunities, and happiness."
 - g. "I surround myself with positivity and love."
3. **What's your mantra?** Write down here what mantra you want to use:
 - a. _____

 - b. _____

 - c. _____

4. **Repeat as necessary:** Repeat the mantra over and over again for two minutes.



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Tod, David, James Hardy, Emily Oliver. "Effects of Self-talk: A Systematic Review". "Effects of Self-talk: A Systematic Review." National Institutes of Health (NIH). October, 2011.

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/21984641/>

Cascio, Cristopher, Matthew Brook O'Donnell, Francis J Tinney et al. "Self-affirmation activates brain systems associated with self-related processing and reward and is reinforced by future orientation" National Institutes of Health (NIH). Nov 5, 2011.

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4814782/>





Humming OR SINGING

When you have negative thoughts, it's sometimes better to take a step back from them. There's something really grounding and soothing about making sounds or music using your own voice. In this technique, we will hum a tune or sing a song. You don't need to be an award-winning vocalist for this to work. It's all about the vibrations and the focus it brings.



Why is this helpful?

One way to distract yourself from negative thoughts is to shift your focus and occupy your mind with the sounds and sensations your body can make. In this technique, we engage our body through vibrations and try to release physical tension.

Tip

When choosing a song, try to find ones that are more positive and hopeful to help lighten your mood.

Instructions:

1. **Pick a song, a tune, or just hum:** Choose a song, it can be your favorite song or a memorable lullaby. Alternatively, you can choose to just hum the tune of that song. If nothing comes to mind, you can just make a sustained “mmm” sound. Don’t worry about being in tune or having the correct rhythm!
2. **Focus on the physical sensations:** Pay attention to the vibrations in your body that the singing or the humming creates. Notice the movement in your chest, throat, and mouth.
3. **Breathe gently:** While you sing or hum, and as you notice the vibrations, keep your breathing even and relaxed. The point is to do these things in a relaxed manner.
4. **Experiment!** Play around and try different pitches and tempos. You can do it quietly to yourself or out loud. Experience and see what feels good in the moment. You might also find that a slow, low hum or a gentle repetitive song works best to calm you down.
5. **For next time:** Write down here what songs or tunes you want to sing or hum next time:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____



References:

Taets, Gunnar Glauco De Cunto, Rafael Tavares Jomar, Angela Maria Mendes Abreu, Marcia Alves Marques Capella. "Effect of music therapy on stress in chemically dependent people: a quasi-experimental study." National Institutes of Health (NIH). January 19, 2014.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6336358/>

Ellis, Robert and Julian Thayerr. "Music and Autonomic Nervous System (Dys)function." National Institutes of Health (NIH). December 29, 2010.
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3011183/>



Mind SCRAMBLING

Ever feel like your anxious thoughts are going on repeat, playing over and over again in your head? For this technique, try letting your mind scramble and focus on random, neutral, non-emotionally charged words and the images associated with them. This is called cognitive shuffling, and it can help improve your sleep by mimicking the way our mind naturally falls asleep.

Why is this helpful?

This version of cognitive shuffling works by gently pulling your mind's attention away from whatever is causing you distress and leading it into a more relaxed state. By giving those racing or overwhelming thoughts less space and providing your mind with an easy puzzle to work on instead, you can achieve a calmer state.

Tip

You can choose words that make you happy. For example, if you like cats, then use the word “cat”.

Instructions:

1. **Pick a random word!** Start off with simple words like “dog”, “cat”, or “house”.
2. **Spell it and brainstorm words:** Focus on each letter of that word and think of other words that start with that letter. For example, if you used the word “dog”, you can name other “d” words such as: “dress”, “diamond”, or “dragon”.
3. **Visualize!** Think of images that come up for each word that you name. Let the idea of the word float in your mind, picture a bright sun dress, a glistening diamond ring, or a grand fire-breathing dragon.
4. **Move to the next letter:** Once you can’t think of any other words for that letter, go to the next letter. For example, the next letter is “o”, name “o” words such as: “onion”, “orange”, or “ostrich”.
5. **Let go and let your mind drift:** If you forgot the original word or the next letter, that’s fine. You can just start with a new random word.
6. **Continue to the last letter:** If you reach the end of the original word, see if you have already lost focus and are more relaxed.
7. **Repeat (if needed):** If you still have racing thoughts, just think about another simple word and start again. Keep going until you have relaxed.
8. **For next time:** Write down here what words you want to start with next time:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____



References:

Beaudoin, Luc, Alexandre Lemyre, Monika Pudlo, and Célyne Bastien. "Towards an integrative design-oriented theory of sleep-onset and insomnolence from which a new cognitive treatment for insomnolence (serial diverse kinesthetic imagining, a form of cognitive shuffling) is proposed for experimentally testing this against alternatives." Summit Research Repository - Simon Fraser University. September 9, 2019.
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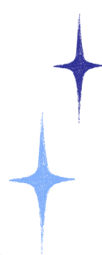
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Practicing GRATITUDE

Ever feel like everything is going wrong or feels overwhelming? During tough times, there are still tiny sparks of good. Practicing gratitude isn't about ignoring your problems; it's about broadening your view to include the good things, no matter how small.



Why is this helpful?

Practicing gratitude regularly can rewire your brain to notice more positive things. Being thankful reminds us that things can't be all bad, and perhaps we can find at least one thing we are glad we are or have. When you focus on gratitude, you shift your perspective from what's lacking or difficult to what's abundant and supportive.

Tip

Nothing is too small to be grateful for!

Instructions:

1. **Find what you're grateful for:** Think about what you're genuinely grateful for. You can start small and simple, think about really basic things. What do you have that helps you live a healthy life or make life easier? Write or say out loud 5 things/people that you're grateful for from your day, your life, or even just this moment. A comfortable chair? A wonderful friend? A warm cup of coffee? A warm pair of socks? The sound of birds? The sun shining? The feeling of safe ground beneath your feet? Having clean water?

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____
- d. _____
- e. _____

2. **Give thanks:** Think of how lucky you are for these things/people. Say thank you.
3. **Focus on why:** Try to think about why you're grateful for them. What do these things or people provide you with? It can be because your socks keep you cozy and warm. It can be because your friend listens to you. Or it can be because you are safe where you are. This keeps your mind in a grateful perspective instead of focusing on the bad things.



References:

Chauhan, Singh Abhijeet, Garima Mathur, Chanda Gulati and Ankita Sharma. "The relationship between gratitude and life satisfaction: The mediating effect of mental well-being." ScienceDirect.com. November 24, 2024.
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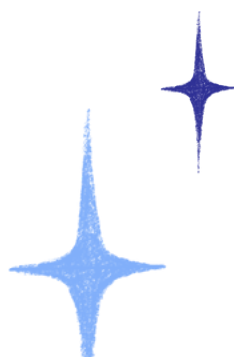
Feeling like you have restless energy or a bundle of trapped emotions? Sometimes, the best way to shake it off is by moving! Dance is defined as rhythmic body movements, often, but not necessarily, to music. There is no right or wrong way to dance. When you move to the rhythm (be it to music, to the beat of drums, or to a sound in your head), this is dance. Whether it's a gentle sway, tapping your feet to a beat, or a full-on dance party, dancing can be a great way to release tension and find your calm.

Why is this helpful?

Moving with rhythm and dancing engages both your body and mind, drawing you away from racing thoughts. Physical activity releases endorphins, which can immediately lift your mood. Allowing oneself to be open to rhythm instead of words is non-demanding and can help you relax slowly. When you can move to the rhythm, you can release stored tension, interrupt rumination, and feel your body in a positive way.

Instructions:

1. **Find a safe space:** Find a space that you're comfortable and safe to move in. Find somewhere that you can move without being judged. It can be in your bedroom or your living room. You can also move or dance with friends you trust.
2. **Find your beat:** Put on some music that makes you want to move, or even just a rhythm or beat in your head. It doesn't have to be upbeat – a slow melody could be just what you need.
3. **Move your body:** Move your body in whatever way you feel comfortable. You can gently sway or rock from side to side, tap your foot to the music, stretch or release tension, or a full-on dance party! No judgments! Let loose, jump, spin, or move freely to the music. Don't worry about how you look.
4. **Be present:** Focus on the sensations your body feels as it moves. Notice the rhythm, the stretch, the release of tension in your muscles. Feel your body in a positive way.
5. **Express yourself:** You can express your emotions without words. If you're feeling frustrated, let your movements be strong. If you're sad, let them be slow and gentle. Allow your body to move and express your feelings.





Tip

Start out slowly if that gives you more comfort. Allow yourself to feel the rhythm and slowly move to it. You can start by gently swaying or just tapping your feet to the rhythm. Move more enthusiastically and/or with bigger movements when you feel more comfortable. To increase your confidence, ask a friend who enjoys dancing to dance with you.



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Hugging

Sometimes, the simplest things are the most powerful. A good hug is like a universal language of comfort, support, and connection. If you hug or are hugged by someone, your body can respond with feel-good chemicals that help you calm down and decrease anxiety.



Why is this helpful?

Hugging can promote feelings of bonding, trust, and well-being. The physical warmth and pressure of a hug can provide immediate comfort and distract from distressing thoughts. This is especially helpful for people who prefer doing/taking action, rather than talking.



Tip

Communicate with your hug partner during the hugging process. Find out how your friend feels about being hugged or touched.

Instructions:



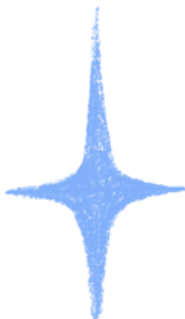
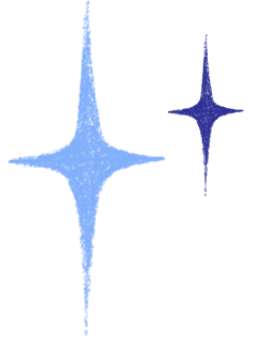
1. **Find a willing hugger:** Consent is always important! Look for a person open to a hug, this could be a trusted family member, a close friend, or a significant other.
2. **Go for the hug:** Get up close to them and put your arms around them. Aim for a hug where you can truly feel the other person's presence. A longer hug often has more calming benefits.
3. **Be present:** As you hug, focus on the sensation. Notice the warmth, the pressure, and the feeling of connection. Hug more, hug less, or stop hugging altogether, depending on how you and your hug partner feels.
4. **If a human hugger isn't available:**
 - a. **Hug a pet:** Ask or look for consent and cuddle with them. It can provide a similar comfort and release of feel-good hormones.
 - b. **Self-hug:** Cross your arms over your chest and give yourself a gentle, firm squeeze.
 - c. **Hug a soft object:** A favorite stuffed toy or pillow can mimic the feeling of being held and offer a sense of security.
5. **Breathe into the embrace:** Take a few slow, deep breaths while hugging. This enhances the calming effect.



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Enjoying NATURE


Ever notice how a walk in a park or just looking at a beautiful tree can make you feel a little lighter? Connecting with nature, even in small doses, has a powerful calming effect on our minds and bodies. Research-based evidence shows that nature is restorative, but many of us live in highly urban areas, surrounded by a concrete jungle. When we are anxious or depressed, going out in nature is healthy and can help. This activity is also known as "forest bathing" or "nature therapy."

Why is this helpful?

Spending time in nature can improve mood, reduce negative thoughts, and boost feelings of well-being. Nature provides a rich sensory environment that can gently distract us from internal distress, offering a sense of perspective and interconnectedness. It reminds us that there's a bigger, calmer world beyond our immediate worries.



Instructions:

1. **Step into nature:** If possible, get yourself outdoors. Check for rain or bring an umbrella. You could go to your backyard, a local park, a community garden, a forest or hiking trail, or just onto your balcony.
 2. **No nature nearby:** Bring nature in!
 - a. **Look out a window:** Find the nearest tree, bush, or patch of sky and just observe it for a few moments.
 - b. **Look at nature photos or videos:** Find high-quality images or calming nature documentaries that can offer a visual escape.
 - c. **Listen to nature sounds:** Find recordings of rain, ocean waves, or forest sounds.
 - d. **Bring plants in:** A small houseplant can add a touch of nature and a calming presence.
 3. **Be present:** Let nature's calming influence wash over you and engage your senses. Don't judge your thoughts, just let them drift as you focus on the natural world:
 - a. **See:** Look at the different shades of green, the patterns of leaves, the different colors of animals and insects, the way the clouds move, or the color of the sky.
 - b. **Hear:** Listen for birds chirping, the sound of the insects, the rustle of leaves, and the sound of wind blowing, etc.
 - c. **Smell:** Take a gentle breath and notice the scent of fresh air, freshly-cut grass, damp earth, flowers, or rain.
 - d. **Feel:** Pay attention to the feel of a gentle breeze, the smooth leaves of a plant, or the texture of a tree bark.
- 



Tip

You do not have to do or be anything to enjoy nature. If going outside, good walking shoes or trainers might be helpful. You can even exercise outdoors!



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Interacting WITH ANIMALS

Animals can bring such joy (and benefits) to people's lives. There's just something about connecting with an animal that can melt away stress. Whether it's the purr of a cat, the wag of a dog's tail, or even just watching fish swim, the simple presence and interaction with an animal can be incredibly calming. Research-based evidence shows that interacting with animals lessens anxiety and depression. Animals are more likely to give unconditional acceptance, and sometimes, that's exactly what we need. It is definitely easier to get along with them, even for introverts. Dogs, in particular, where a lot of research is focused, are beneficial.

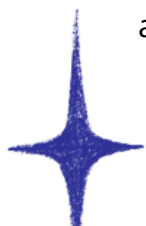
Why is this helpful?

There are multiple benefits to human-animal interactions (HAI), including improved immune function, a decrease in cortisol (the stress hormone), and reductions in blood pressure and heart rate. As already mentioned, it can result in decreased anxiety and depression levels, too.



Instructions:

1. **If you have a pet:** Spend a few minutes actively engaging with and enjoying the company of your pet. This could mean gently petting them, playing with them, or even just sitting quietly with them near you.
2. **If you don't have a pet:** Don't worry! You can still experience the benefits.
 - a. **Visit a friend's pet:** Ask if any of your friends have a pet that you can spend some time with.
 - b. **Watch animal videos:** Sometimes, just watching cute or calming animal videos can bring a smile and a sense of peace.
 - c. **Visit an animal shelter or a pet store:** Check first if it's a good environment for you and the animals. Ask if you can just sit and observe or if you can pet the animals. Simply observing animals can be soothing.
 - d. **Connect in nature:** Watch birds, squirrels, or other wildlife from a distance at a nearby park, trail, or forest.
3. **Ask for permission:** Remember, before petting or touching an animal, you need to make sure it is safe to do so. Ask the owners/parents of the pet first for permission to pet or ask the staff at the shelter/pet store if unsure.
4. **Focus on the connection:** As you interact, try to be fully present. Pay attention to the texture of their fur, the rhythm of their breathing, the warmth of their body, or the sounds that they make. Let your attention be absorbed by the interaction rather than your thoughts.

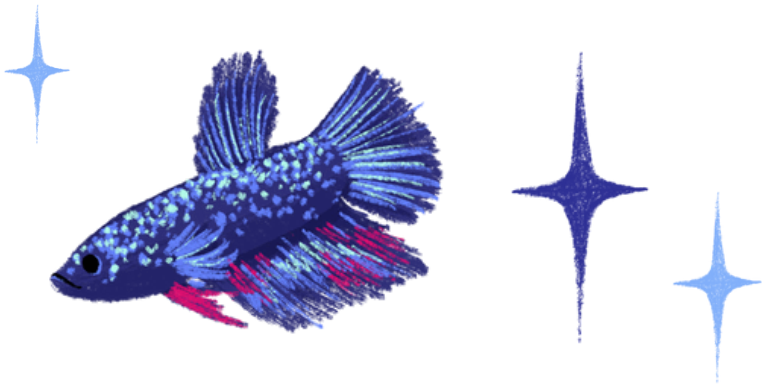




Tip

How long and often the interactions affect the joy and benefits you may experience. You might also consider getting a pet you can love and care for responsibly.

Having a pet is a big responsibility. You need to consider whether the costs of having one (financial, time, and effort to walk and clean, etc.) are worth the joy of having a pet. If you decide having a pet is not for you, you can talk to people who have pets and offer to pet-sit or take them out for walks.



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