

Toolkit of fast, effective relaxation techniques

These techniques are evidence-based strategies you can use anytime you feel stressed, overwhelmed or anxious, to calm your nervous system and switch off your fight or flight response.



R.A.I.N.

R – recognise what it is you're feelingaaah this is chest tension/anxiety/worry etc

A – acceptit's only temporary, it's allowed to be here right now

I – investigate...where is it in my body? What does it feel like? Is it changing as I watch it?

N – nurtue, be kind and practice self-compassion

Mindfulness Teacher, Michelle O'Donnell.

Get in water.

A swim or warm shower or bath is very calming for the nervous system.

Meditate.

Find a quiet space and focus on your breath or use a guided relaxation meditation. Meditation is one of the most well researched ways to calm your mind and promote the relaxation response. Even meditating for 1 minute is enough to slow your brain waves down, which will help you feel calmer and better able to focus. Try an app like Headspace, Calm or Insight Timer.

Mindful Colouring.

Our brain loves colouring. There's something about colour, the small, repetitive strokes and staying within the lines that helps us stay present, slows our heart rate, slows our brain waves and calms the fear response in our brain. It also boosts creativity and mental energy.

Diaphragmatic breathing.

Take 10 – 15 slow, deep belly breaths, as opposed to chest breathing, really extending the exhale. This sends a signal to our amygdala (the fear centre of the brain) that we are safe, which overrides the stress response, reverses the production of stress hormones and slows down our heart rate.

Mindfulness.

Put your phone away and bring yourself into the present moment, engaging your senses, for just a few minutes and try one of the following exercises:

- Mindful eating
- Mindful walking
- Mindful driving
- Mindful cuppa
- Mindful shower/bath
- Mindful time in nature

Other ideas.

The following also promote the rest, digest and repair strand of the nervous system and moves us away from 'fight or flight':

- Gargling
- Dancing
- Patting an animal
- Giving and kindness
- Yoga
- Mindful time in nature
- Surfing
- Laughter
- Singing
- Calming music
- Gratitude