



Controlled Breathing

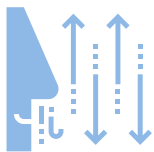
You can use controlled breathing to calm your fight-or-flight response. Remember, you don't *have* to use controlled breathing to soothe this response; the fight-or-flight response is **not** dangerous and will pass naturally on its own. But controlled breathing can help you feel more relaxed, and might give you a greater sense of control over your stress or anxiety.

Controlled breathing can feel strange at first, but with practice, it should start to feel more natural. Practise controlled breathing when you feel relaxed, so that you can easily use it when you feel stressed.

How To Do Controlled Breathing



Sit or lie down somewhere quietly, where you're unlikely to be disturbed.



Start to breathe in and out gently through your nose.



Breathe into your diaphragm, rather than your upper chest (your stomach should rise and fall as you breathe, rather than your chest).



Breathe in for three counts, and out for three counts. As you breathe out, notice the tension leaving your body.



Continue for at least three minutes, or until you feel calmer.

If you have a medical condition that might be impacted by controlled breathing, please consult with your doctor before trying this strategy.

Good Sleep Guide

This resource will explain a little bit about improving sleep and give you some tips for overcoming common sleeping difficulties.

Common Questions

How Much Sleep Do I Need?

Everyone differs in the amount of sleep they need. Sleep research indicates that people differ a lot in the amount of sleep they need and require less sleep as they get older.

Is My Lack of Sleep Harmful?

There is no evidence that sleep deprivation causes short- or long-term damage to the brain or body. Sleep deprived people may experience irritability, extreme sleepiness, difficulty concentrating, and reduced motivation; however **you cannot die from lack of sleep**. Nature has provided us with an inbuilt mechanism that ensures we will fall asleep if we really need to. If your body really needs sleep, you can be sure that almost nothing will be able to stop it.

When is Sleeplessness a Problem?

For many, sleeplessness is unpleasant and stressful. This is often due to the fact that people spend much of the time awake at night worrying. So, these people feel tired the next day partly because they slept relatively little, and partly because the worrying has exhausted them. When you can't sleep, **lying in bed worrying makes things worse**. A more effective option is to get up and do something distracting and relaxing. This way, even if you aren't sleeping, at least you are resting.

Insomnia

Insomnia is defined as a **chronic inability to sleep**. Most people with insomnia do sleep, but feel that they did not get enough sleep, or that their sleep had too many disruptions so they don't feel refreshed in the morning. Often, it's not the lack of sleep that prompts a person to seek help, but how the person feels about and copes with their sleeplessness.

The Circadian Rhythm

All humans have a 'biological clock' (the **circadian rhythm**) that enables them to regulate things like body temperature and energy. Body temperature reaches its highest and lowest points once every 24 hours. Feelings of sleepiness rise and fall in parallel with body temperature; people typically feel most alert when their body temperature is highest and feel sleepy as their body temperature falls. The circadian rhythm influences our readiness to fall asleep by controlling variations in body temperature.

Common Causes of Sleep Disturbance

Anxiety

It can be difficult to relax after a hectic day. Many people find that they start worrying when they get into bed. These worries are often accompanied by muscle tension, which can make it even more difficult to sleep. Then people start to worry about not sleeping - it's a vicious cycle!

Caffeine

Coffee, tea, cocoa, cola drinks, energy drinks, and some over-the-counter prescriptions contain caffeine. Consuming these products, especially in the afternoon, will increase feelings of energy and wakefulness and make it more difficult to sleep.

Nicotine

Nicotine stimulates the nervous system by initiating the release of a hormone called adrenaline. Adrenaline arouses the body and mind, making you alert and ready for action. Therefore, smoking prior to bed causes increased energy and liveliness, making it difficult to fall asleep.

Alcohol

Alcohol can make you fall asleep quickly, however, it **reduces your sleep quality**. If you drink alcohol regularly, you might also come to depend on alcohol to reduce your anxiety and help you get to sleep. This will mean you wake up feeling unrefreshed, and are more likely to have rebound anxiety which will last throughout the day and make it even more difficult to get to sleep at night.

THIS WAY UP ↑↑

Being Uncomfortable

Aches, discomfort, or being too hot or cold can make it hard to relax. Ensure that all your immediate needs have been met before you try to sleep. For instance, if you're hungry, have a light snack before you go to bed. Getting to sleep is easier when you're comfortable.

Noise

Periodic loud noises, like traffic, disturb sleep. Even if you don't wake up fully, these noises can interfere with your sleep pattern. Try to reduce noise by closing windows and doors or wearing earplugs. Some people also find it useful to turn off appliances which make 'white noise' during the night (the noise that TVs and other appliances can emit even when they are off).

Sleeping Pills

Sleeping pills can facilitate sleep onset and decrease anxiety in the short-term. In the long-term however, these benefits disappear – you will begin to feel anxious and sleepless even though you're taking the pills. Although you might then be tempted to take more pills, the benefit of doing so won't be permanent either, resulting in a vicious cycle of addiction. **If you are currently taking sleeping pills every night to help you sleep, speak to your doctor about gradually reducing your use.**

Tips for Improving Sleep

Here's a list of things to try to improve your sleep:

- To establish and maintain a healthy circadian rhythm, go to bed at the same time every night and get up at the same time every morning. **Do not sleep late in the mornings trying to make up for lost sleep.**
- Similarly, **do not nap** during the day, no matter how tired you are during the day.
- Try to **reduce noise** levels by closing windows and doors.
- **Avoid caffeine** in the evenings, and preferably in the afternoons.

THIS WAY UP ↑↑

- **Get out of bed:** If you're lying in bed unable to stop thinking about things, get up and do something distracting and relaxing (e.g. read a book, listen to classical music). Don't return to bed until you feel sleepy again. If you return to bed and feel the same way, get out of bed again and do something distracting and relaxing again. You may need to do this a few times before you can get into bed and fall asleep. The whole idea is that you learn to associate bed with sleep.
- **Make time for problem solving during the day:** Set aside time where you can think of ways to solve your problems. This may require you to make decisions. This may be difficult, but avoiding facing anxious thoughts only worsens anxiety. Often the uncertainty that accompanies indecision is more stressful than the consequences of a decision! If you experience the same thoughts when you get into bed, remind yourself that you have already thought about them for today and postpone worrying until tomorrow.
- **Regular exercise** during the day or early in the evening can improve sleeping patterns (however, don't exercise late in the evening as this may make it more difficult for you to sleep).
- Develop a short and relaxing evening **routine** (including things such as washing your face and cleaning your teeth) to help you to wind down and get in the 'mood' for sleep.
- If you smoke, **abstain** for at least an hour before going to bed so that the stimulating effects of nicotine can wear off.
- **Limit alcohol consumption** to within health guidelines and do not use alcohol to help you sleep.
- Make sure all your immediate needs are met before you get into bed (e.g. make sure you're not hungry or cold).
- If you need to, **speak to your GP about stopping your use of sleeping medications.**



In Case of Emergency

If you experience suicidal thoughts, it is **very important** that you talk to someone about it.

Suicidal thoughts and feelings are horrible, but they do pass and they are easier to deal with when you talk to someone. You can talk to your family, friends, doctor or therapist if you have one.

If you are **in Australia** and you feel that you are at risk of suicide, contact one of the following immediately:

Your Doctor

Where possible, your doctor should be your first point of contact during a crisis. Doctors are experienced in helping during crises and can help you find appropriate services. Your doctor's contact details:

The Police or Ambulance

Phone **000** for emergency assistance or go to your nearest hospital emergency department

Lifeline Australia

Phone **13 11 14** for free, 24-hour telephone crisis support.
www.lifeline.org.au

The Suicide Call Back Service

Phone **1300 659 467** for free, 24-hour telephone crisis support.
www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Your State's Crisis Service

- NSW** Mental Health Line on 1800 011 511
- VIC** Suicide Help Line on 1300 651 251
- QLD** Mental Health Access Line on 1300 642 255
- TAS** Mental Health Services Helpline on 1800 332 388
- SA** Mental Health Assessment and Crisis Intervention Service on 13 14 65
- NT** Mental Health Line on 1800 682 288
- ACT** Mental Health Triage Service on 1800 629 354
- WA** Mental Health Emergency Response Line on 1300 555 788 (Metro), or 1800 676 822 (Peel)

If you live **outside of Australia**, contact your therapist as soon as possible. You can also consult the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) to find international crisis centres: https://www.iasp.info/resources/Crisis_Centres/. If you are experiencing a psychiatric crisis, please contact your local emergency services.



Managing Your Mood

It's common to feel flat or depressed when facing challenges, stress, anxiety or even change. Fortunately, there are some simple strategies you can use to boost your mood. We strongly encourage you to:



Do at least one fun or satisfying activity every day (see the list of activities below for inspiration).



Avoid or cut-down alcohol. Alcohol is a depressant and will worsen your mood. Do this in consultation with your doctor, to ensure that any changes you make are safe.



Exercise every day, even if it's just a brisk walk. Exercise is one of the most effective treatments for depression, and it's free!



Get 8 hours of sleep a night – it can be difficult to feel good if you're tired!



Drink lots of water and eat healthily. Anxiety, fatigue, and low mood get worse if you're eating unhealthy foods or if you're dehydrated.



Be kind to yourself! Instead of criticising yourself, remind yourself that you are just starting to learn about managing your symptoms. Don't expect yourself to be an expert.

If you do at least two of these things every day for the duration of this program, by the end you'll be doing them automatically (and noticing the benefits)!

If your mood is really low, speak to your doctor (and your supervising therapist, if you have one) as soon as possible to talk about different treatment options.

If you live in Australia and would like to see a psychologist, you can use the 'Find a Psychologist' tool on the Australian Psychological Society (APS) website: www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist.



Managing Your Mood

One of the most effective ways to boost your mood is to do something that gives you a sense of fun, interest, joy or achievement. If you can't think of *anything* to do, just try one of these activities!

- Go for a walk
- Call friends or family
- Watch a new TV show
- Watch a movie
- Listen to music
- Listen to an audiobook
- Draw or paint
- Read a book
- Do some gardening
- Get coffee with a friend
- Put clean sheets on
- Cook something new
- Walk barefoot in grass
- Have a cup of tea
- Try yoga
- Have someone over
- Do colouring-in
- Join a sports team
- Have a movie night
- Clean the bathroom
- Get comfortable
- Read a magazine
- Clean the kitchen
- Reorganise your shelves
- Plan out your week

- Go to the cinema
- Try photography
- Do a puzzle
- Play a computer game
- Sing at karaoke
- Bake
- Get dinner with friends
- Do a cardio gym class
- Play a board game
- Write a poem or story
- Go bushwalking
- Go jogging
- Do volunteer work
- Donate money to charity
- Go swimming
- Go cycling
- Learn a new language
- Listen to a podcast
- Sort out your wardrobe
- Hug a loved one
- Buy some indoor plants
- Reply to text messages
- Attend an art class
- Clean up your street
- Make your bed

- Have a bath
- Play sport
- Go surfing
- Watch clouds float by
- Go fishing
- Write a bucket list
- Do a crossword
- Play an instrument
- Go to a park
- Have a picnic
- Go to a museum
- Visit an art gallery
- Go to the markets
- Go to the beach
- Try ten pin bowling
- Try pilates
- Do a Sudoku
- Do a DIY project
- Do woodwork
- Spend time with a pet
- Lie in the sun
- Write a grocery list
- Watch a documentary
- Give yourself a facial
- Go running with a friend



Managing Your Mood

Take an online course

Pick up a new hobby

Visit a tourist spot

Meditate

Go to the gym

Get your nails done

Try sewing

Sit in a park

Call an elderly relative

Try calligraphy

Go shopping

Look through old photos

Try journaling

Go stargazing

Prepare some meals

Make a music playlist

Clean your oven

Go camping

Give someone a massage

Try karate

Do an at-home manicure

Go to the theatre

Go sailing

Attend a cooking class

Vacuum your house

Try knitting

Start a bullet journal

Give clothes to charity

Visit botanic gardens

Pray

Make a fresh coffee

Buy someone a gift

Sing

Redecorate your room

Get a massage

Try kick-boxing

Watch the sunset

Send a thank you card

Buy some fresh flowers

Help a friend

Iron your clothes

Take a day trip

Organise a roadtrip

Write a gratitude list

Write a to-do list

Bake cookies

Attend a seminar

Call an overseas friend

Make pizza dough

Go indoor rock-climbing

Get dressed up

Go window shopping

Compliment someone

Clear your email inbox

Declutter

Learn a new skill

Make fresh bread

Try scrapbooking

Plan a holiday

Visit a spa

Burn a candle

Attend a trivia night

Pay off some debt

Take a slow deep breath

Try an escape room

Make some candles

Book a night in a hotel

Online shopping

Try jujitsu

Clean out the fridge

Attend a concert

Visit the beach

Have a weekend away

Clean up your computer

Try flower arranging

Choose a few of these activities to do each week. Try to choose some activities that you can do on your own and some you can do with other people. It can also be helpful to choose a mix of both active and relaxing activities.



Positives Hunt Worksheet

Monday

Every day, write down at *least* one positive experience (big or small) that happened that day.

This will help your mind learn to notice the good things in life, something it doesn't do naturally when you're feeling worried or depressed.

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday



Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Persistent stress and anxiety can cause prolonged muscle tension, which, in turn, can cause discomfort, pain, headaches, irritability, and fatigue (often worsening anxiety). Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR) can reduce some of these feelings.

How To Do PMR

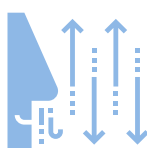
PMR involves systematically tensing and relaxing your major muscle groups, from your feet upwards. To do PMR, you can follow the outline below (it takes about 10 minutes) or listen to our audio guide here: <https://thiswayup.org.au/pmr-audio-2/>. Over time, you'll learn the sequence and won't need to keep referring to these resources.



Sit comfortably in a chair, in a quiet, private space. Rest your feet flat on the ground. You can also lie on the floor, if that's more comfortable for you. Close your eyes if that helps you relax.



Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, slowly and gently. Breathe with your diaphragm, rather than your upper chest (imagine your stomach filling with air as you breathe in, like a balloon).



Notice the feeling of your breath as it passes through your nose towards your stomach. On each out breath, encourage yourself to relax. You can even say 'relax' to yourself in your mind. Continue this for a few minutes.



When you're ready, shift your attention to your feet. What do they feel like? Warm, cold, tingly? Gently curl your toes under your feet. Hold for a few moments, then release and relax. Repeat and continue this for a minute or two.



Next, shift your attention to your lower legs. Gently tense your calves for a few moments, then release and relax. Breathe slowly and smoothly, and relax each time you breathe out. Repeat for your thighs, bottom, and stomach.



Progressive Muscle Relaxation



Then, shift your attention to your shoulders and neck. Notice any tension or tightness in these areas. Gently tense your shoulders and hold for a few moments. As you breathe out, relax - drop your shoulders and lengthen your neck. Repeat for a minute or two.



Next, become aware of your fingers, hands, and arms. Breathe slowly and smoothly, as you pay attention to the sensations in these areas. When you're ready, tense these muscles for a few moments before gradually releasing. Breathe out, releasing any tension left in your arms for a few minutes.



Now, focus on your face and head - your lips, cheeks, eyelids, nose, forehead, and scalp. Gently screw up your nose, purse your lips, close your eyes tightly, and furrow your brow. Hold for a few moments and then, as you breathe out, relax. Notice the difference between the tense and relaxed feelings. Continue this for a few minutes.



To finish, bring your attention back to your breath. Breathe slowly and smoothly. Scan your body, from your feet to your head, looking for any sources of tension. As you breathe out, let go of any tension you find. Enjoy the feeling of relaxation throughout your whole body. When you're ready, open your eyes and bring your attention to where you are.

PMR Tips

- Some people feel anxious about 'wasting time' when they try to relax. Remember that relaxation training is a valuable skill to learn - it will help boost your mental health and productivity.
- Practice in a quiet space where you won't be disturbed.
- Don't tense your muscles too tightly; PMR shouldn't be painful or uncomfortable.
- You can try doing PMR before bed, to help you sleep.
- Practice PMR regularly to get the most benefit.
- Don't worry if your mind wanders during the exercise, that's normal. Whenever it happens, just bring your attention back to the exercise.



Self-Care Plan

Step 1

List situations that you might find challenging or stressful in the future

Step 2

Be aware of the signs that you're not coping as well as you'd like (tick those that apply to you).

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Being more irritable or grumpy | <input type="checkbox"/> Eating badly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling overwhelmed | <input type="checkbox"/> Difficulty sleeping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling tired or sore | <input type="checkbox"/> Thinking negatively |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Procrastinating tasks | <input type="checkbox"/> Feeling like you can't be bothered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking more alcohol | <input type="checkbox"/> Worsening self-esteem |

List any other signs you should keep an eye out for:

Step 3

Plan out how you will take care of yourself during stressful times. Tick the strategies that you'll do regularly to boost your emotional wellbeing:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Controlled breathing | <input type="checkbox"/> Scheduling 'me time' |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relaxation exercises | <input type="checkbox"/> Improving my diet |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Talking to others | <input type="checkbox"/> Improving my sleep |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Physical exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Thought challenging |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Saying 'no' to some things | <input type="checkbox"/> Structured problem solving |



Self-Care Plan

List any other strategies that you can use to help you cope:

Plan out how you will implement these strategies. Specify **what** you will do, **when** you will do it, and **how** you will do it:

Keep this plan somewhere easily visible (e.g. on the fridge). It can also be helpful to share it with people you trust, as they can help you notice any warning signs and remind you to use helpful coping strategies.