

Coping with Changes

Brought by COVID-19



Using relaxation strategies

In this unprecedented time of worldwide pandemic, we are likely all experiencing some degree of stress (even the word pandemic invokes worry)! We feel threatened. And what happens in our body when we perceive a threat is that our sympathetic nervous system releases stress hormones to arouse key organs, resulting in an increase in heart and respiratory rate, greater muscle tension, coldness and sweatiness, and a decrease in intestinal activity. This is the fight or flight response. You may have observed some of this yourself.

In contrast, taking deep breaths and focusing on breathing induces a relaxation response. This response engages the parasympathetic nervous system, which lowers the heart and respiratory rate, blood pressure, and muscle tension. Below are some ways to invoke the relaxation response when you are feeling stressed.

- Try [4-7-8 breathing](#)
- Do a [short body scan](#)

Apply cold packs or a cold washcloth to your face for at least 30 seconds to cue the “mammalian diving reflex,” a survival response that occurs when our faces are submerged in cold water. It causes our heart rate to drop immediately and invokes the parasympathetic nervous system, which in turn prompts the relaxation response.

- Take a slow [mindful walk](#) (around your home works)
- Watch a lovely [nature video](#)

Other ideas:

[Learn relaxation techniques](#)

[How do mind-body approaches work?](#)



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