

# DISTRESS OR DE-STRESS?

## BREATHE, LET GO, and RELAX

### DEEP BREATHING

"I get so stressed I forget to breathe!" Don't get caught in the trap! Deep breathing is a simple and powerful relaxation technique. It is the cornerstone of many meditation practices and can be combined with other relaxing elements such as aromatherapy and music.

#### Benefits of Deep Breathing

- Easy to learn
- Can be done anywhere and anytime
- Increases oxygen flow in your blood
- Decreases tension, shortness of breath, and anxiety
- Re-energizes and promotes relaxation



#### How to Practice Deep Breathing

1. Sit comfortably with your back straight. Place one hand on your chest and one on your stomach.
2. Slowly inhale through your nose, expanding your abdomen and allowing air to fill your lungs. Breathe deeply from the abdomen – get as much fresh air as possible into your lungs. You should feel your lower abdomen rise and fall. As you inhale more oxygen, you decrease tension, shortness of breath, and anxiety.
3. Exhale through your mouth, counting slowly as you let out as much air as you can, and contract your abdomen.
4. Continue to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

**Do this exercise for 3 to 5 minutes or whenever you feel tense.**



## LAUGHTER

Stress is no joke! Is laughter the best medicine? When it comes to relieving stress, more giggles are just what the doctor ordered. A good sense of humour can't cure all ailments, but research is revealing all of the positive things laughter can bring to our lives.

#### Physical Health Benefits

- Boosts immunity
- Lowers stress hormones
- Relaxes your muscles

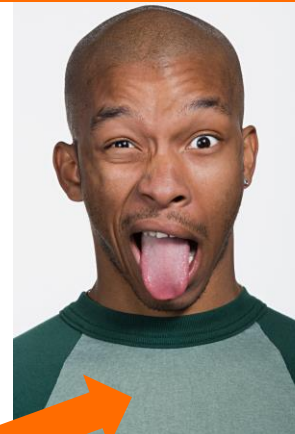
#### Mental Health Benefits

- Eases anxiety and fear
- Adds joy to life
- Improves mood

#### Social Benefits

- Strengthens relationships
- Enhances teamwork

**Make a first aid kit:** Find a few photos, jokes, or videos that make you chuckle. Keep them on hand when you need a humour boost. Why not cut out this picture?



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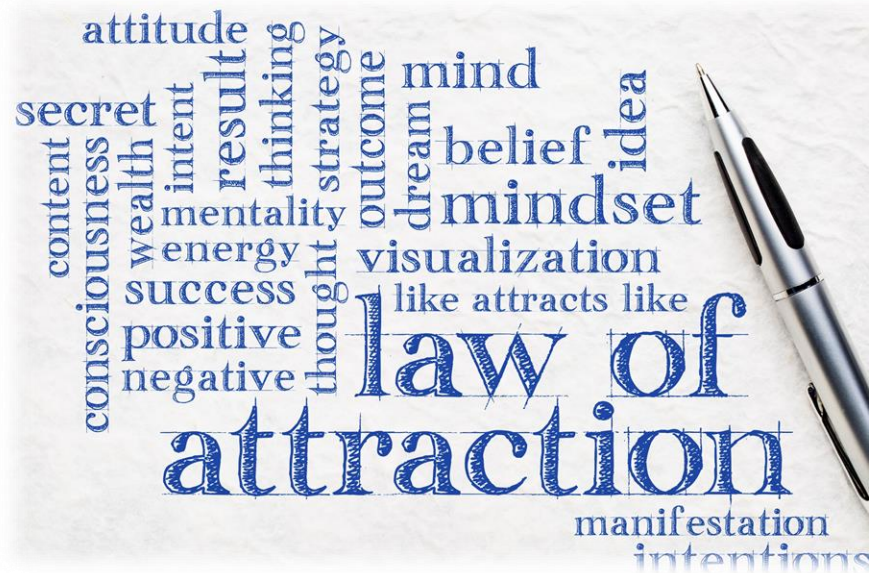
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### VISUALIZATION

Visualization is like daydreaming with a purpose. When used as a relaxation technique, visualization involves imagining a scene in which you feel at peace and free to let go of tension and anxiety. This practice requires you to employ all of your senses: sight, taste, touch, smell, and sound.

#### Benefits of Visualization

- Easy to do anytime and anywhere
- Decreases stress
- Strengthens the immune system
- Helps to synthesize endorphins
- Can maximize performance



#### How to Practice Visualization

1. Find a quiet and relaxing environment.
2. Assume a comfortable sitting or standing position.
3. Choose a setting that is calming to you (e.g., beach, park, favourite childhood spot).
4. Close your eyes and let your worries drift away. Imagine your calming place. Picture the setting as vividly as possible by using at least 3 senses.  
For example, you are on a park bench in a quiet space.
  - Hear the birds singing.
  - Smell the fresh pine trees.
  - Feel the cool ground at your feet.
  - Taste the clean air.
5. Enjoy the feeling of deep relaxation as you explore your restful place.
6. When ready, open your eyes and return to the present.

**Tip: Choose a setting that appeals to YOU. Do not select images that someone else suggested.**

Sources: <https://www.helpguide.org/articles/mental-health/laughter-is-the-best-medicine.htm>  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management/in-depth/decrease-stress-by-using-your-breath/art-20267197>  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/flourish/200912/seeing-is-believing-the-power-visualization>