

KEEP THESE WHERE YOU'LL SEE THEM

QUICK REFERENCE CARDS

Cut along the dashed lines. Keep them by the bed, in a pocket, on the fridge.

01 4-7-8 BREATHING

For Immediate Calm

WHEN TO USE

Acute stress, panic, before difficult situations, trouble falling asleep

HOW TO DO IT

1. Breathe in quietly through your nose for 4 counts
2. Hold your breath for 7 counts
3. Exhale completely through your mouth (or nose) for 8 counts
4. This is one cycle—repeat for 4 cycles total

KEY POINTS

- The ratio matters more than the exact count (if 4-7-8 feels too long, try 2-3.5-4)
- The long exhale is most important
- Don't strain—if holding feels uncomfortable, hold for less time
- Should feel calming within 1-2 minutes

MODIFICATIONS

- COPD / limited lung capacity: keep breaths shallow, focus on extending exhale
- Anxiety about holding breath: shorten holds to 3-4 counts or skip entirely
- Using oxygen: keep oxygen on, focus on rhythm, not depth

02 BOX BREATHING

For Grounding and Focus

WHEN TO USE

Scattered mind, feeling untethered, need steady focus, middle-of-the-night waking

HOW TO DO IT

1. Breathe in through your nose for 4 counts
2. Hold your breath for 4 counts
3. Breathe out through your nose (or mouth) for 4 counts
4. Hold your breath (empty lungs) for 4 counts
5. Repeat for 5-10 cycles or as long as it feels good

KEY POINTS

- All four sides equal (adjust to 3 or 5 if 4 doesn't work)
- Visualize a box: up, across, down, across
- Holds should be comfortable, not strained
- Creates a sense of order and control

MODIFICATIONS

- If holding creates anxiety: skip holds, just do equal inhales and exhales
- For longer practice: continue for 5-10 minutes

03 EXTENDED EXHALE

For Daily Tension

WHEN TO USE

Background tension, throughout the day, not in crisis, but not at ease

HOW TO DO IT

1. Breathe in naturally through your nose (don't force it deeper)
2. Exhale slowly, extending it just a bit longer than the inhale
3. Pause naturally at the end of the exhale
4. Repeat for as long as you like

KEY POINTS

- This is the simplest, most forgiving technique
- No counting required—just make exhale longer than inhale
- Can do anywhere, anytime, without anyone noticing
- Subtle but powerful over time

MODIFICATIONS

- Can do while doing other activities (cooking, watching TV, waiting)
- Perfect for building a new baseline over weeks

04 PHYSIOLOGICAL SIGH

Emergency Reset

WHEN TO USE

Sudden panic, immediate stress spike, when other techniques aren't cutting through

HOW TO DO IT

1. Take a deep inhale through your nose
2. At the top, take a second, shorter inhale (a little sip of air on top)
3. Exhale slowly and completely through your mouth (or nose)
4. Repeat 2-3 times

KEY POINTS

- The double inhale is key—reinflates collapsed alveoli in lungs
- Long exhale activates the parasympathetic nervous system
- Fast-acting—works within 30-60 seconds
- Based on Stanford neuroscience research

05 FIVE-SENSES GROUNDING

For Overwhelm & Spiraling

WHEN TO USE

Dissociation, spiral thinking, overwhelm, panic attacks

NOTICE AND NAME

- 5 things you can see (clock, window, hands, wall, floor)
- 4 things you can touch (shirt, chair, skin, table)
- 3 things you can hear (traffic, fan, birds, silence)
- 2 things you can smell (coffee, soap, nothing is okay)
- 1 thing you can taste (even if just inside of mouth)

KEY POINTS

- Takes 2-3 minutes
- Pulls you out of your head into the present moment
- Grounds and orients the nervous system
- No wrong answers—just notice what's actually here

BODY SCAN SCRIPT

Duration: 5–10 minutes · **Position:** lying down, sitting, or standing — whatever’s comfortable. Close your eyes, or soften your gaze downward.

Take three deep breaths. Just arriving. Just settling.

Now, bring your attention to your feet. Not thinking about your feet—just feeling them. Are they warm? Cool? Can you feel them against your socks, your shoes, the floor? Notice whatever’s there. No need to change anything.

After 10–15 seconds...

Move your attention to your ankles and lower legs. What do you notice? Tightness? Ease? Heaviness? Just noticing.

Continue up to your knees... your thighs... Notice the feeling of your legs on the chair, or the bed, or however they’re supported.

Bring attention to your hips and pelvis. This is where a lot of people hold tension. Just notice. No judgment.

Move to your lower back and abdomen. What’s happening here? Tightness? Softness? Is your breath moving? Just observe.

Your mid-back and chest. Feel your breath moving in this area. Notice if there’s constriction or openness.

Your shoulders. This is where most people discover they’re holding significant tension. Are your shoulders up by your ears? Just notice. If they want to drop, let them. If they don’t, that’s okay too.

Your upper arms, elbows, forearms, and hands. Are your hands in fists or open? Cold or warm? Just noticing.

Your neck. Front, back, sides. Notice if you’re holding your head in a particular way. See if you can soften.

Your jaw. Are you clenching? Even slightly? Your tongue—where is it? Pressed against the roof of your mouth? See if you can let your jaw hang slightly open.

Your face. Your forehead, your eyes, your cheeks. Notice if you’re holding an expression. See if you can soften.

The crown of your head. Just awareness reaching all the way up.

Now, bring your attention back to your whole body. Take three more deep breaths.

Notice: Does anything feel different than when you started? Lighter? Softer? Or the same? Whatever you notice is okay.

When you’re ready, gently open your eyes.

NOTES

- You can record yourself reading this and play it back
- Move more slowly if you have more time
- It's okay if you fall asleep during this practice
- Some areas might be numb or blank—that's normal, just move on

MEDITATION STARTER SCRIPTS

SCRIPT 1 • THREE-MINUTE BREATH COUNTING

Sit comfortably. Close your eyes or lower your gaze.

Take three settling breaths.

Now, breathe naturally. Don't control it—just observe.

On your first exhale, silently count “one.” On your second exhale, count “two.”

Continue up to “ten.” When you reach ten, start over at “one.”

Your mind will wander. That's not failure. When you notice you've lost count, just start over at “one.”

You might start over twenty times in three minutes. That's perfect. Every time you notice and return is success.

Continue for three minutes. When your timer sounds, take one more deep breath and open your eyes.

SCRIPT 2 • THREE-MINUTE LOVING-KINDNESS (SELF)

Sit comfortably. Close your eyes. Place one hand on your heart if that feels good. Take three breaths.

Bring to mind an image of yourself—not as you wish you were, but as you are. Right now. In this body. At this age.

SILENTLY REPEAT THESE PHRASES

May I be safe. May I be healthy. May I be at ease. May I be happy.

Say them slowly. Let each phrase have space.

If resistance comes up—“I don't deserve this” or “This is silly”—just notice it. Let it be there. Keep saying the phrases.

Repeat the cycle 3–5 times over three minutes. When you're done, take three more breaths. Open your eyes.

SCRIPT 3 • THREE-MINUTE SOUND MEDITATION

Sit comfortably. Close your eyes or soften your gaze. Take three settling breaths.

Now, open your awareness to sound. Don't go looking for sounds—let them come to you.

Near sounds. Far sounds. Loud. Soft. Constant or intermittent.

Don't name them or analyze them. Just hear them.

When your mind wanders into thought—and it will—gently bring your attention back to listening.

Let sounds arise and pass away. You're not holding onto them. Just receiving them. Continue for three minutes.

When your timer sounds, take one more breath and open your eyes.

STRESS TRACKER

Use this only if tracking feels helpful, not if it creates more anxiety.

SIMPLE DAILY LOG

TIME	STRESS (1-10)	WHAT TRIGGERED IT?	TECHNIQUE USED	HOW LONG?	OUTCOME (1-10)
Morning					
Midday					
Evening					

WHAT TO TRACK

- **Stress level:** 1 = deeply calm, 10 = full panic
- **What triggered it:** be specific (phone call from daughter, doctor appointment, unpaid bill)
- **Technique used:** which practice did you try?
- **How long:** 2 minutes? 10 minutes?
- **Outcome:** did stress decrease? By how much?

STOP TRACKING IF

- It's making you more anxious
- You're obsessing over numbers
- It feels like homework rather than helpful

WEEKLY PRACTICE PLANNER

MY THREE CORE TECHNIQUES

- _____ (Breathing practice)
- _____ (Somatic practice)
- _____ (Meditation / mindfulness practice)

THIS WEEK’S SCHEDULE

DAY	MORNING PRACTICE	MIDDAY RESET	EVENING WIND-DOWN	NOTES
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Saturday				
Sunday				

END OF WEEK REFLECTION

- What worked: _____
- What was hard: _____
- What I’ll adjust next week: _____
- Stress level at start of week (1–10): ____ at end of week (1–10): ____

EMERGENCY CALM CARD

✂ CUT AROUND THE BOX, THEN FOLD ALONG THE DASHED CENTER LINE

FRONT

EMERGENCY CALM

*When stress spikes suddenly — you're okay.
You're safe. This will pass.*

PICK ONE AND DO IT NOW

1. Physiological Sigh (30 sec)

- Big inhale through nose
- Small sip of air on top
- Long exhale through mouth
- Repeat 2–3 times

2. 4-7-8 Breathing (90 sec)

- In for 4, hold for 7, out for 8
- Repeat 4 times

3. Cold Water (1 min)

- Splash cold water on face
- Or hold a cold washcloth to your face

4. 5-Senses Grounding (2 min)

- 5 see · 4 touch · 3 hear
- 2 smell · 1 taste

BACK

REMEMBER

- ✓ This is activation, not danger
- ✓ Your nervous system is trying to protect you
- ✓ You know how to help it calm down
- ✓ This feeling will pass
- ✓ You've survived 100% of your hardest days

AFTER THE MOMENT PASSES

- Do a body scan
- Notice where you're still holding tension
- Soften what you can · be gentle with yourself

IF THIS BECOMES A PATTERN

- Revisit the stress-patterns chapter
- Consider talking to your doctor
- Increase daily practices · ask for support

You're not broken. You're activated — and you can calm activation. Print it, laminate it if you can, and keep it in your wallet, your car, or your bedside table.