

STRESS MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

Use these evidence-based techniques when you are feeling overwhelmed or stressed.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation involves tensing each muscle group for about 5–10 seconds, then slowly releasing the tension and focusing on the sensation of relaxation. Start from your feet and work your way up to your head, breathing deeply throughout.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing involves breathing into your stomach (diaphragm) rather than your chest. By doing this you are activating the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps our bodies to relax and regulate. Do this for a few minutes to help destress.

Exercise

Exercise reduces stress by lowering cortisol levels, releasing endorphins, and improving overall mood and sleep quality. Different types include aerobic exercises (running, swimming), strength training (weightlifting, resistance bands), and mind-body activities (yoga, tai chi). Other types include walking, hiking, sports, stretching, etc.

Gratitude

Practicing gratitude helps to calm the nervous system and focus on positives. You can do this by saying, writing, or thinking of things you are grateful for. For example, a gratitude journal, gratitude jar, or telling someone you are grateful for them are all ways to practice gratitude.

Mindfulness Meditation

Mindfulness meditation aims to enhance present-moment awareness, reduce stress, and improve emotional regulation by focusing on the breath, sensations, or thoughts without judgment. To practice, sit comfortably, close your eyes, and focus on your breath, gently bringing your attention back whenever your mind wanders. See the “Guided Meditations” section for mindfulness meditations to follow.

Journaling

Journaling helps reduce stress by allowing self-expression, processing emotions, and gaining clarity on thoughts and concerns. You can write freely or follow a prompt. See “Journal Prompts” section for guided journal prompts to follow.