

STEPS

{To reduce that big overwhelming feeling of being under threat but you are not actually in any danger.}
 {The feeling that makes you feel like running even though there is nothing actually chasing you.}
 {Also known as: Anxiety.}

1. <u>Recognize and acknowledge</u>	2. <u>Visualize</u>	3. <u>Breathe.</u>	4. <u>Do something</u>
<p>what you are feeling.</p> <p>I am feeling anxious. I am feeling panicky. I am feeling overwhelmed. I am feeling misunderstood.</p> <p>(If knowing what you are feeling is difficult, start with what you are feeling physically –racing heart, sweaty palms, itchy feeling in chest?)</p> <p>Insert your feeling/sensation: _____</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Stopping. Turning Around. And <i>Saying Hi</i> to that feeling/sensation.</p> <p>Think: Compassionate curiosity instead of judgment...just like you would with a dear friend.</p> <p><i>Hi, feeling. What are you trying to tell me? What do I want to do with this information?</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Big, soothing belly breaths...</p> <p><i>If your chest is rising more than your belly, you are chest breathing. Move the breath down to your belly. Belly breathing signals your nervous system that you are safe. It physically encourages your body to stop producing stress hormones.</i></p> <p>-maybe doing the 4-7-8 breathing technique or the 1-2-3-4 technique. **</p> <p>-maybe while closing your eyes.</p> <p>-maybe relaxing your shoulders, more and more, with each exhale.</p> <p>-maybe while bringing to mind a heartfelt thought or emotion like gratitude or love and smiling. **</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>The thought could be something like:</i> <i>I trust myself.</i> <i>I am okay.</i> <i>This too shall pass.</i> <i>I accept myself and move toward growth.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Insert your personally needed/motivating phrase that brings up a calming physical response in the area of your chest:</u> _____ _____ _____</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Positive, productive, joyful or otherwise uplifting.</p> <p>This sounds so simple but it is so important to own your power. Your power comes from choosing how you spend your time/energy. It is in choosing to move toward helpful and enriching feelings and actions.</p> <p><u>Positive action ideas to have in your back pocket:</u></p> <p>Turning up the music and dancing around your room! Journaling. Taking a stroll in nature. Coloring. Cleaning/Decorating a room.</p> <p>_____.</p> <p>_____.</p> <p>_____.</p> <p>_____.</p> <p>Know (not hope or think or try but) KNOW that you can engage your natural calming mechanism (also known as your parasympathetic nervous system). **</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Know your power.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Then: Cultivate it. Daily.</p>
<p>5. Repeat.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Repeat, at least, steps #3 and #4: <i>Daily</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">This daily practice will help ensure these skills are more readily available to you during times of stress.</p>			

Tips for forming a new relationship with your thoughts:

Not everything we think, we need to take as truth. Not everything we feel, we need to respond to. Think of your thoughts and feelings as cars passing on a busy highway with you sitting up on a hill just watching them pass by. Those cars (...thoughts...) have no importance to you, until **you** give them importance.

A sign of wisdom is not believing everything you think. A sign of emotional intelligence is not internalizing everything you feel. Thoughts and emotions are possibilities to entertain, not certainties to take for granted. Question them before you accept them.

~Adam Grant

A (very) little lesson on your Autonomic Nervous System:

Your body reacts to stress/anxiety the same way it reacts to a bear chasing you.

It kicks in your sympathetic nervous system.

Your eyes dilate, your breathing increases, sweating, muscles tense and blood is pumped at a faster rate which means your heart rate increases, adrenaline is released, and digestion decreases.

Why is this important to know?

Repeated activation of the stress response takes a toll on the body. Your body is not designed to have your sympathetic nervous system constantly activated.

You can consciously activate the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS)– which is essentially the braking system of the sympathetic nervous system.

The PNS is called the rest and digest system.

When the PNS is activated it produces a relaxed and calming feeling in the body and in the mind.

Belly breathing, gently touching your lips, exercise, and/or any of those “positive action ideas” mentioned on page 1 can help activate your PNS.

Here is a secret to the “Do Something”/“Positive Action Ideas” section:

There is no wrong answer to the “do something.” ...*Seriously!*

The important thing is that you give your head and heart something different to focus upon. Something that is: uplifting, productive, joyful, playful, restorative, loving, creative, authentic, relaxing, etc.

We can get stuck in thinking “but I don’t know what to do!” To which the secret is: choose that something that is already forming in your head (or look at the list you have already created for moments like this) and just commit to testing that action out. Do not commit to anything beyond, “I will test this out and move on if I do not like it.”

Either you are going to decide that action is a good fit or you are going to decide to move on to another positive action. Regardless, you doing the work of shifting your energy and your focus.

You have stimulated your PNS and claimed your power to live a life full of self-compassion and love.

Owning our story and loving ourselves through the process is the bravest thing we will ever do.

~Brené Brown

4-7-8 Breathing technique:

This technique is helpful because your brain is not capable of focusing on breathing in and out in an intentional way and counting AND holding anxious thoughts. Therefore, to deliberate focusing your breathing and on counting means there is less room to give energy to your anxious/unhelpful thoughts.

Repeat a minimum of 5 times when you are feeling extreme anxiety:

Inhale through the nose for 4 counts (it helps to count with your fingers)

Hold breath for 7 seconds

Exhale breath out of your mouth for 8 seconds

1-2-3-4 Breathing Technique Combining a Heartfelt Emotion:

Breathe in such a way that your inhalation and exhalation are the same duration; for example, count 1-2-3-4 in your mind while inhaling and 1-2-3-4 while exhaling.

At the same time, imagine or sense that you’re breathing in and out through the area of your heart.

Meanwhile, bring to mind a heartfelt emotion like gratitude or love.

@Rick Hanson, PhD, 2007