

# TIPS FOR TACKLING STRESS

Life can be stressful. Things like work, relationships and finances can leave you feeling overwhelmed and exhausted.

While you can't always eliminate stress, you can seek help and learn to manage it so that it doesn't take a toll on your physical and emotional well-being.

Stress and anxiety aren't the same. To learn about their differences, visit [nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/so-stressed-out-fact-sheet](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/so-stressed-out-fact-sheet).

If you, your child or someone you know is thinking about self-harm, call or text the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline at **988**, chat at [988lifeline.org](https://988lifeline.org), or go to the nearest hospital emergency room.

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## Diaphragmatic breathing

Breathing changes with mood, and mood changes with breathing. When stressed, our breathing rate increases.

There are two types of breathing:

1. Chest breathing (typically rapid) can cause unneeded stress.
2. Diaphragmatic breathing (typically slower) signals to the body that "all is well."

## Here are some activities you can try when you start feeling overwhelmed:

### 3-part breath

This full-bodied natural breath can help you relieve stress. All three parts flow into one, like the filling and deflating of a balloon.

- Start with one hand on your chest and one on your stomach.
- Let out a long, slow exhale and relax.
- Breathe into your stomach while keeping your chest still.
- Then let your stomach and chest expand before deflating.
- Then let your stomach, chest and shoulders expand before deflating from your shoulders to chest to stomach.

### 5-4-3-2-1 coping technique

- 5: Acknowledge 5 things you can **see** around you.
- 4: Acknowledge 4 things you can **touch** around you.

- 3: Acknowledge 3 things you can **hear**.
- 2: Acknowledge 2 things you can **smell**.
- 1: Acknowledge 1 thing you can **taste**.

### TIPP for distress tolerance

- Temperature—Our bodies will heat up when we're upset. To quickly calm down, splash cold water over your face.
- Intense exercise at a pace that is comfortable to you and/or recommended by your health care clinician.
- Try using the 3-part breath.
- Progressive muscle relaxation.

### Progressive muscle relaxation

- While inhaling, contract one muscle group for five seconds, then exhale and release the tension.
- Relax for 10 seconds, then move onto the next muscle group (e.g. legs, arms).
- Focus on the changes you feel when the muscle group is relaxed.
- Gradually make your way back up the body, contracting and relaxing different muscle groups.
- Audio to guide you through this exercise can be found on YouTube and wellness apps like Headspace.

### Stay connected

Spending quality time with loved ones and your community can improve both your physical and mental health.