Cleveland Clinic
Wellness

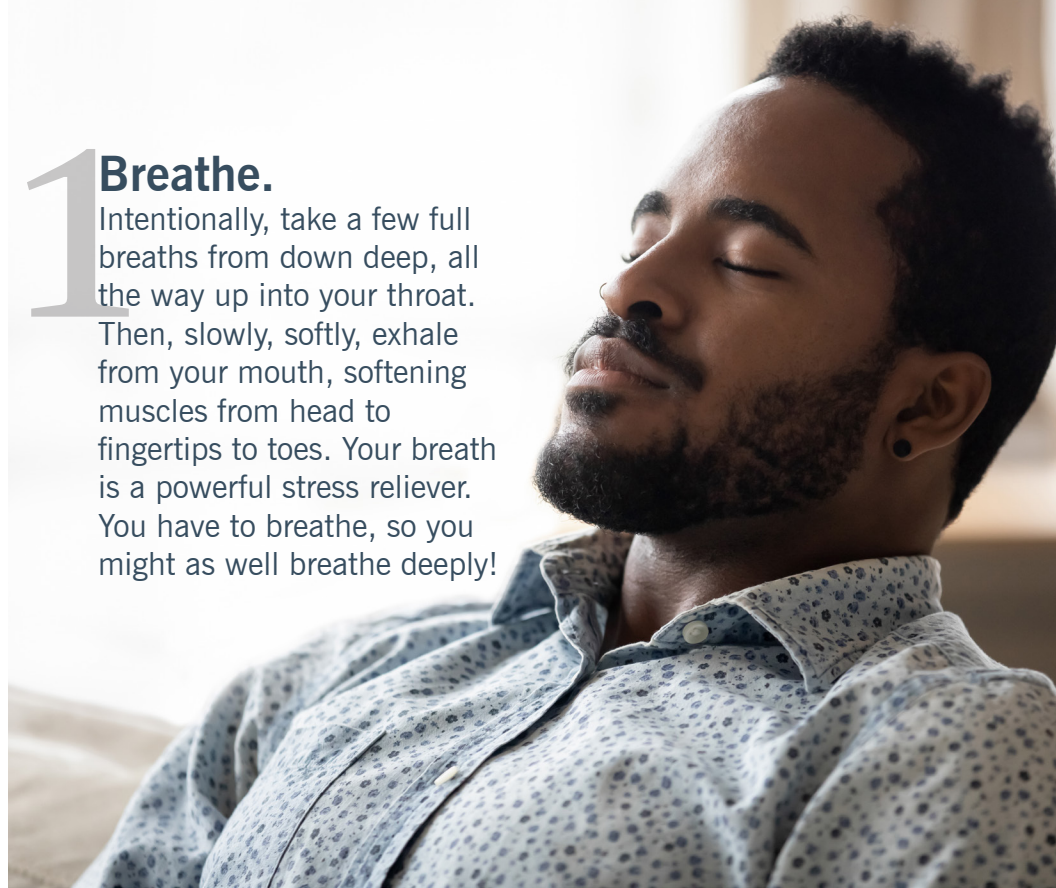# 10 Stress Relief Tips During COVID-19

1 Breathe.
Intentionally, take a few full breaths from down deep, all the way up into your throat. Then, slowly, softly, exhale from your mouth, softening muscles from head to fingertips to toes. Your breath is a powerful stress reliever. You have to breathe, so you might as well breathe deeply!

2 Take control where you have it.
Ask yourself: "Where do I have control in this situation, and what's outside my power?" There's nothing productive about worrying what your coworkers are doing, or whether a family member might get sick. Focus your energy where you have control and let the rest go.

3 Worry with purpose.
When your worry is about something in your control, follow it up with possible solutions and action steps you can take to deal with the concern. Simply spinning in "what if…" thoughts waste your time and energy and can also lead to anxiety.

4 Have an effective tantrum.
If you have a stressful situation that is out of your control, you might want to rant and rave. Give yourself 10 minutes to do just that. Go off by yourself to raise your voice, express your anger, maybe even punch a pillow and vent. Let that energy go! Then be done. When your mind goes back there, remind yourself that you're done with that for today.

5 Put your imagination on a short leash.
When you're stressed out, it's easy to imagine the worst. You can become anxious about a story created in your imagination that isn't even true. Just as you would put a puppy on a leash, to guide it to safe places, put your imagination on a leash and keep it from running wild. You can't control the thoughts that pop into your head, but you can decide which thoughts to entertain.

6 Use Mind-Body practices to calm yourself.

Make time and space in your day (10-20min) for practices such as: Mindfulness, and meditations focused on gratitude and loving-kindness. These practices will relieve stress, lower blood pressure, improve your mood, reduce pain, restore your energy and enable better sleep.

7 Bedtime: 3 Good Things.

Before getting into bed at the end of the day, write down 3 good things that happened and the emotions they sparked. Appreciate simple, positive things: you woke up today/happy; a meaningful talk with a friend/appreciation; sunbeams through trees/awe. Research shows this practice will improve sleep, mood and over time, reduce symptoms of depression.

8 Take effective breaks.

We are most productive and focused in 90minute cycles (ultradian cycles). An effective 10-15min break refreshes the mind and boosts creative problem-solving. Effective breaks include: A short, brisk walk (outside if possible), mindful breathing, fresh water and healthy snack, 5-10min meditation, or stretching (gentle yoga). Checking emails, returning phone calls or perusing the internet are not effective breaks.

9 Pause between meetings.

During this age of multiple Zoom meetings, make certain that you pause between meetings, even for 30 seconds, just sit and breathe or drink some water, and quiet yourself. You will be more present, focused and clearheaded in each meeting you attend.

10 Take a break from media.

News that has credible, accurate information is helpful. Rumor, theory, or gossip can create stress and anxiety. Social media platforms have been shown to cause stress, anxiety and agitation. Decide how much is enough. If, after watching the news or being on social media, you feel stressed and agitated, it may be a sign you need to take a break for awhile.

Center for Integrated & Lifestyle Medicine
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