



FASTFIVE

How to re-center when you're stressed

You've likely heard how going for a walk, talking to a friend, or listening to music provide stress relief. These actions help reduce stress, but they require you to put space between you and the source of your stress. What happens when you can't step away from the stressor?

"As we have learned from the pandemic, the unknown is always just around the corner, and sometimes it lasts longer than we anticipate," says Glenn Armstrong, APRN-CNP, administrative director and lead advanced practice provider at Kettering Physician Network Behavioral Health. "It's important to put coping strategies for stress in place when you think you don't need them so you have them when you do."

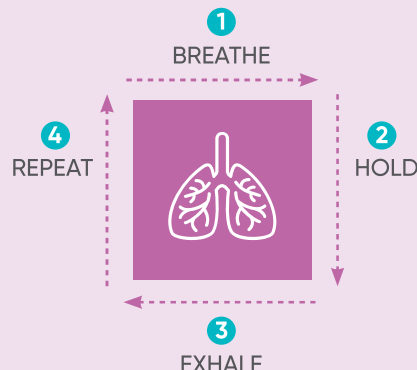
Five ways to feel more calm

- 1 Box breathing:** Used by Navy SEALs, box breathing can reset your fight-or-flight response. Learn more at right.
- 2 Mindfulness:** Mindfulness is the practice of being present in the moment, experiencing what is happening without judgment, and identifying how you're feeling.
- 3 Self-affirmations:** Self-affirmations, such as "I am strong and capable of making it through this situation," can reduce stress and improve mood.
- 4 Prayer:** Believing in a higher power, identifying its presence, and expressing your gratitude can offer a sense of calm.
- 5 Progressive muscle relaxation:** You can use this to recognize where you carry stress. Tense and then relax groups of muscles in your body, starting with your toes and working your way up.

Try the box breathing technique

When you're stressed, your autonomic nervous system signals your body to release hormones that increase your heart rate, blood pressure, and respiration. Box breathing can reset these unconscious processes, allowing your body to return to a state of calm.

- 1** Breathe in through your nose while slowly counting to four.
- 2** Hold your breath for a count of four.
- 3** Slowly exhale for a count of four.
- 4** Repeat steps 1–3 at least four times, or until a feeling of calm returns.



STRESS IS AMERICA'S LEADING HEALTH PROBLEM. Turn the page to learn about the physical effects of stress—and find strategies to help you stress less.