

# MANAGING STRESS

*A workbook for a calmer life.*





# OUR BODIES ARE DESIGNED FOR STRESS

(But, not too much ...)

Stress is inevitable and a part of our everyday lives. In fact, half of our autonomic nervous system, known as the *Sympathetic Nervous System* (famous for activating our “fight or flight” response), is designed to support us in the daily activities that cause us stress. While the other half, the *Parasympathetic Nervous System* (responsible for promoting our “rest and digest” response), is designed to help us to recover from the stressors of our daily life.

**So, the goal isn't to eliminate stress altogether but rather to ensure that we are giving ourselves the time and space necessary to counterbalance the effects of stress by activating our parasympathetic nervous system.** In other words, we aim to pulse between times of stress and times of relaxation. Too often we get stuck in a stress cycle that keeps our bodies tense and prevents our minds from integrating and letting go of challenging experiences.

We designed this workbook to help you explore new ways to both counterbalance and decrease stress in your life. Wishing you more peace and calm.

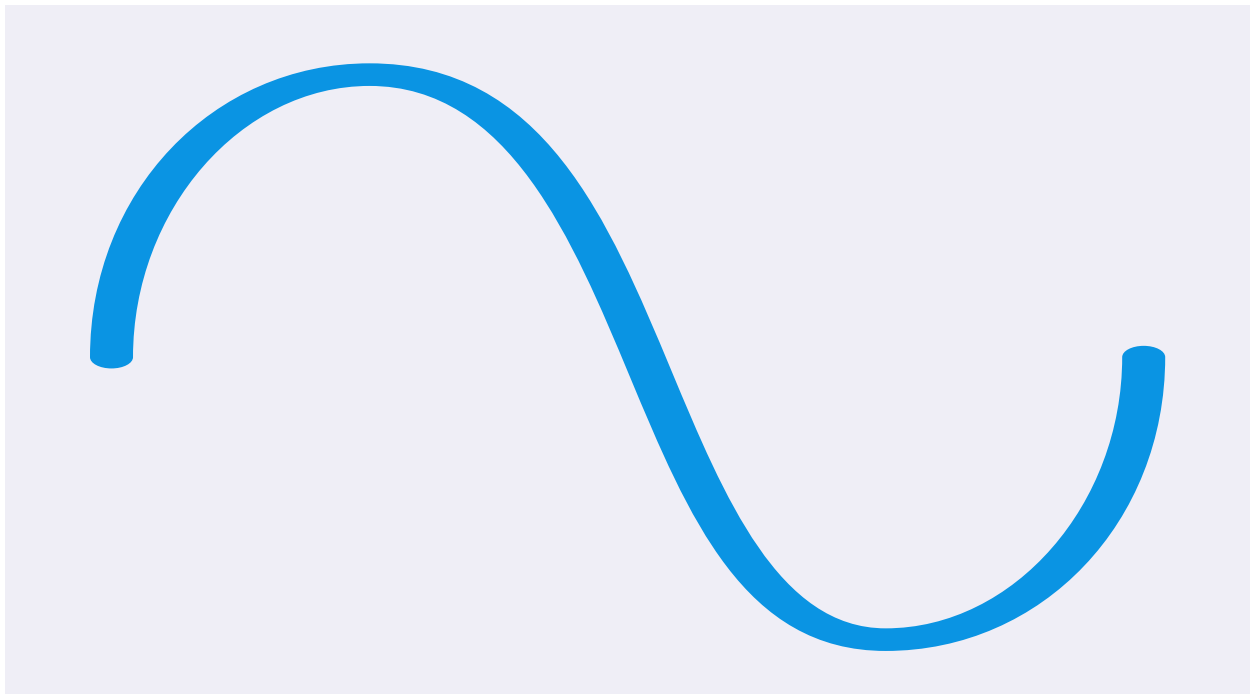
*“One of the best pieces of advice I ever got was from a horse master. He told me to go slow to go fast. I think that applies to everything in life. We live as though there aren’t enough hours in the day but if we do each thing calmly and carefully we will get it done quicker and with much less stress.”*

– VIGGO MORTENSEN



# UNDERSTANDING YOUR STRESS

Write down your daily activities (work, sleep, hanging out with friends, daycare pickup, cooking, etc...) along the curve below. The activities at the top of the curve being the most stressful and the activities at the bottom being the most relaxing.



Next to each activity, note any particular body sensations or feelings related to that activity. For example: Do your shoulders feel tense? Are you smiling? Do you feel worried? Do you feel happy?

*How does looking at this chart make you feel? What comes up for you as you look at it?*

Take a moment to  
acknowledge how much you  
do and how much that requires  
of your body, mind, and heart.



# ACTIVATING YOUR RELAXATION RESPONSE



It's so important to check in with yourself each day. When life gets busy, there can be a snowball effect. Busyness begets busyness. And if we don't take some time every day to interrupt the "snowball" from rolling, it gets bigger, faster, and harder to stop, leading to burning out or, to keep with the snowball analogy, crashing into a wall. This is easily prevented by intentionally pausing and taking some time for yourself.

## What helps you to rejuvenate?

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Time in nature                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Laughter                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Visualization                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fresh air  | <input type="checkbox"/> Time with animals        | <input type="checkbox"/> Slowing down                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Meditation                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> A body scan              | <input type="checkbox"/> Stretching   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise   | <input type="checkbox"/> Stretching               | <input type="checkbox"/> Giving yourself double the time to complete a task |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bodywork<br><i>(massage, acupuncture etc...)</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> Mindful movement or yoga | <input type="checkbox"/> Performing an activity mindfully                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Deep breathing                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Walking                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Single-tasking<br><i>(versus multitasking)</i>     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play   | <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to music       | <input type="checkbox"/> _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Touch  | <input type="checkbox"/> Talking to a friend      | <input type="checkbox"/> _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A hug  | <input type="checkbox"/> Listening to music       |   |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> A hobby                  |   |

Many of these things can be easily incorporated into your day and used to interrupt stress as it builds. For example, reaching out to a friend who often makes you laugh, might help put things into clearer perspective or at the very least allow your jaw to soften.

*Take a moment to brainstorm a few ways to bring more of these activities into your routine.*

A large, fluffy white cloud is centered in the upper half of the image, set against a teal background. The cloud has a soft, textured appearance with some darker shadows within its folds. The overall color palette is a monochromatic teal with white highlights from the cloud.

# RELAXATION TOOLKIT

*Simple tricks and tips to decrease stress.*

# CREATING HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

Time is a limited and precious resource, so we feel best when we spend it wisely. Boundaries support us to choose meaningful priorities and let go of the things that don't provide nourishment.

To create a boundary that supports you, start with a value that you have; from there, determine what you need to make that value possible and then determine how you can honor that need.

## For example:

Value:

**Connection**

Need (*how to make the value possible*):

**Time with a close friend each week.**

Boundary (*how to honor the need*):

**Tuesday nights are for friend dates.**

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Value:

**Feeling good in my body**

Need (*how to make the value possible*):

**Time to stretch and breathe.**

Boundary (*how to honor the need*):

**I will start my day with Calm Body or some sort of exercise.**

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Value:

**Downtime**

Need (*how to make the value possible*):

**Space in my schedule.**

Boundary (*how to honor the need*):

**I will not make plans/commitments on Sundays.**

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## Your turn:

Value:

Need (*how to make the value possible*):

Boundary (*how to honor the need*):





## TOUCH YOUR LIPS

Gently run one or two of your fingers over your lips. Your lips have parasympathetic fibers spread throughout them, so touching them activates the bodies relaxation response.

You can try this anywhere!

# THE STOP TECHNIQUE

**S**top

**T**ake a breath.

**O**bserve.

**P**roceed.

By stopping, taking a breath, observing what's going on within, and then proceeding, we can get present, and de-escalate our stress before it grows. Try this practice the next time you feel stress starting to build.

*“The time to relax is when you  
don’t have time for it.”*

– SYDNEY HARRIS

# LET GO OF MULTITASKING

We can perform tasks with the most efficiency and effectiveness when we are focusing on the task at hand without distraction. Essentially, this is mindfulness in action. It's not always possible but whenever you can, choose single-tasking over multitasking. While multitasking can feel exciting, we often end up getting less done and feeling more stressed.

## Tips for Single-Tasking:

- Turn off notifications and put your phone away.
- Set a timer and focus for that amount of time (start small - begin with 20 minutes and work your way up to 90 minutes). During this time you'll say no to all distractions, so it can be helpful to go to the washroom, drink some water, check your social media and eat a snack before starting.
- One of the reasons we like multitasking is that when we get stuck on our task we can escape it by checking our email, but it's important to sit with the problem to allow for creativity to arise.
- Take a small break after you've focused for a set amount of time to restore your mind and body before starting a new task.

*Where in your life could you benefit from single-tasking?*

# IMAGINE YOURSELF IN YOUR CALM PLACE

Visualize yourself in a beautiful place that you love. Perhaps it's your favorite place to watch the sunset, a stream, a lush forest, a secret beach, or a field of wildflowers. Invite all of your senses to imagine yourself there. Hear the evening crickets, feel the sand in between your toes, and smell the flowers.



# CULTIVATE A CALM ATTITUDE

The tricky thing about stress is that it impacts the body's ability to effectively do its job. For example, you might choose to eat a healthy lunch, but if you're eating it while stressed (perhaps feeling like you don't have time to eat and that you should be working), the body won't be able to digest and absorb all of the amazing nutrients that you consumed. The

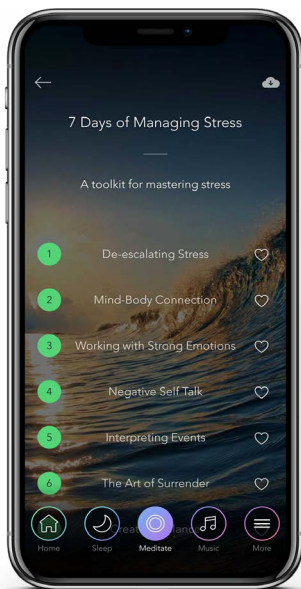
same is true with exercise. If you workout from a place of feeling not good enough and like you need to fix yourself, you'll build unnecessary tension, stay in fight-or-flight mode, and miss out on the awesome benefits of going to the gym in the first place.

## Here are few ways to help your body reap the rewards of your efforts:

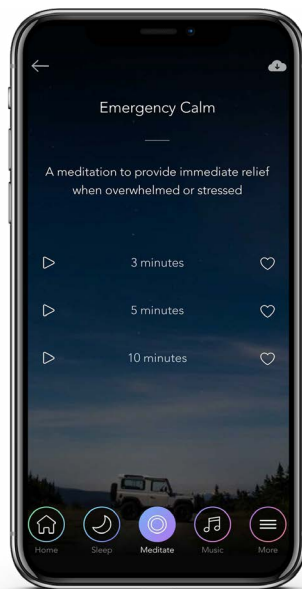
- Before eating, take a few deep breaths and give yourself this time just to eat.
- While exercising, workout at 70% of your capacity, this will give you the spaciousness required to be mindful and take good care of your body.
- If you're overwhelmed by what you have to do, find ways to respond to your workload rather than react to it. For example, write a list of everything that you have to do and then choose the most important thing to do and start there.
- Give yourself one minute stretch breaks to feel and honor your body.
- Bring a sense of humor and light-heartedness to the situation.
- Bring a hint of a smile to your lips.

*What activities can you approach with more ease?*

# Explore more resources in the Calm app.



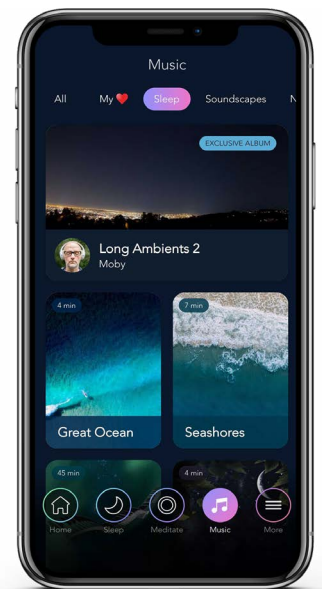
Deepen your awareness  
and discover new strategies  
to support your life.



In the moment support  
for times of overwhelm.



Let go of stress in  
your body.



Music for focus, relaxation  
and sleep.



*“Sometimes the most important thing in a whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths.”*

– ETTY HILLESUM

