

Welcome to your D-Stress kit!

If you are looking for simple, effective things that you can do to shift your mind and body out of stress-mode and into health, you have come to the right place. Perhaps, like me, you have heard about the impact of stress on health, but thought “What can I do about it? Life is stressful right now!” My doctors told me to “reduce stress” but never had any real advice on how to do that. Finally, one doctor steered me toward health coaching, and it was a game changer.

While in school for health coaching, I learned so much about exactly how stress affects the body, and what I could do about it. I began to put it into practice, and then teaching it to clients. The impact was often profound, and I found myself wanting to share what was working with anyone who would listen!

In this kit, I am going to give you 6 different ways you can dial down the stress, starting right now! You don't need any special equipment, and you don't need a lot of time. [Watch this video](#), and let's get started!

DELIBERATE BREATHWORK

If I could only share one tip with you for dialing down stress, it would be Deliberate Breathwork, taking time each day to do what I call “conscious breathing.” Taking control of breathing, which is usually done without any thinking, is the fastest way to shift your body out of fight or flight and into rest and digest.

It doesn't have to be complicated, and you can experiment to find a breathing pattern that works best for you. Some people like breathing patterns where you are counting the beats of the breath; some where you pause the breath. Others find the pause stressful, which is the opposite of what we're going for. So find what you click with best, and that may change from day to day!

Whichever pattern you choose, it is ok to start out with a faster pace, and then slow it down as the relaxation response kicks in. Just continue to slow down the pace, the more relaxed you feel. [Click here](#) for a video demo I made for you, of the following breathing patterns, or just continue reading below. If you happen to have an essential oil like ylang ylang, lavender, bergamot, sandalwood or anything you find calming, put a drop into your hands to increase the benefit of the breath work you are doing!

IN-OUT-OUT

The most basic breathing pattern I teach is one that I call In-Out-Out. The important thing, rather than the pace of the breath, is that you exhale for longer than you inhaled. Sit tall, or lie down, and breathe in at a comfortable slow pace. Exhale, and exhale a little bit more. Repeat. Scan your body for any areas of tension, and try to relax them a little bit more as you continue this pattern. As your body relaxes more, try slowing down the pace of your breath, even as little as 3% slower.

SQUARE BREATHING

I like square breathing because of the symmetry of it, and the visual of drawing a square with the breath can help anchor you while trying to do the breathwork during a stressful moment. You draw the top side of the breath while counting in your mind to four, pause as you count to four down the side, breathe out for four as you go across the bottom, and then pause for four as you complete the fourth side. The act of counting for some is helpful to keep the mind busy instead of spinning thoughts while you work to shift out of fight/flight and into rest/digest.

ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING

This breathing pattern takes a little more concentration, which is great if you need extra help in quieting the mind to create this shift in your body. Take your middle finger on one hand, and close one nostril with it. Inhale from the open side, and then press that side closed with your thumb. (Both sides will be closed for a moment). Lift off your middle finger, and exhale slowly. KEEP that side open, and slowly inhale. Press the middle finger to close the nostril, take your time to lift off the thumb (creating a little pause in the breath), and exhale through the now-open thumb side. KEEP that side open. Breathe in slowly, press the thumb to close the nostril (both sides are closed for a moment). Then lift the middle finger and exhale through that side. (The video is especially helpful for this one!)

DIAL DOWN RITUAL

A Dial Down Ritual is some sort of bedtime routine that helps prepare your body better for sleep. Even if you can't go to bed at the exact same time every night due to work schedule, or kids etc, having the same routine/ritual signals your body to begin the process of winding down.

This ritual is something that is really personal, but usually includes shutting off screens at least 30 minutes before you go to bed. Conscious Breathing is a great activity for this ritual, as is prayer, gentle stretching (don't get your heart rate up!), an epsom salt bath, a good book, etc. It may also include prepping some things for the morning.

HERE IS A SAMPLE OF A MY DIAL DOWN RITUAL.. This usually starts around 8PM, and at times has included music and breathwork. Currently I do that in the early afternoon. I also do my bath earlier than right before bed, as I use the heat to help my body detox, and falling asleep right after a hot bath is usually harder. So I kick off my last couple hours that way.

EPSOM SALT BATH

NETFLIX COMEDY WITH HUBBY

PEEK AT TOMORROW'S FAMILY SCHEDULE

BRUSH TEETH, MOISTURIZE FACE ETC

GET GLASS OF WATER FOR MY BEDSIDE

MORNING CLOTHES LAID OUT

DARKEN THE BEDROOM (COVER MY WINDOW- IT'S LIGHT IN THE CITY!)
SLOW STRETCH ON MY BED
READ (BIBLE OR RELAXING FUN BOOK)
JOURNAL/PRAY
SLEEPY TIME ESSENTIAL OILS ON MY PULSE POINTS AND NECK
CHAPSTICK
LIGHTS OUT

You can experiment with what things help to calm your body down, signal that melatonin to kick in, the mind to shut off. Start by writing down what your current routine looks like. You might be surprised by some ritual there you had not noticed. And then consider what might be ONE thing to add to it in the coming week. Remember, small hinges swing big doors. You don't have to do it all this week. Start smaller, for long term success!

MY CURRENT DIAL DOWN RITUAL

Start Time: _____

Habits:

Bedtime: _____

WHAT ONE (OR TWO) ITEMS DO YOU WANT TO ADD TO YOUR EVENING RITUAL AS AN EXPERIMENT TO SEE WHAT WORKS FOR YOU?

DAILY GRATITUDE

Daily gratitude can be a simple journal entry during your Dial Down Ritual, It can also be a mission you set for yourself, that includes taking photos of small and big things you are grateful for throughout the day. If this is an area you feel you'd like more of in your life, here are some ideas to get you started!

Buy a small journal and keep it with you. As you find things you are thankful for, or something that makes you smile, or appreciate a thing or moment of beauty, take the time to write it down. You may even want to number them. The more you write, the more you will see! I guarantee it! This was a very powerful project for me personally, and even led to a [writing a song](#) about it.

Take a photo with your phone of anything you appreciate, for a week, a month, a year. You could even create a special folder for them on your or laptop. When the collection grows, it can be fun to grab a deal on a photobook and print them out, for a month, or a year!

If this is an area you struggle with, especially in a time of major stress, start with making a list of what you would miss if it were gone tomorrow. Your bed? The view from your window? The smile of a coworker everytime you enter the office? A child clinging to your hand? Don't judge yourself too harshly if you feel this is a struggle. Life can be hard, and it gives us tunnel vision. Just start to look around. You will find the good!

DIAL UP YOUR CHEWING

Your digestion is very affected by stress. One of the simplest ways to put a dent in this, is to increase how long you chew your food. You can level up this activity but occasionally setting down your fork or spoon while you chew, and remembering to take a slow, relaxing breath periodically during the meal.

Let's do an experiment! Grab something you have on hand, whether it's a piece of bread, an almond, an apple, and chew one bite of it. How many times did you chew it? How many chews do you have to complete in order for it to be totally turned to mush before you swallow?

Digestion starts in the mouth, mechanically with the chewing, and with enzymes for any carb portion of your meal. Dialing up your chewing can improve digestion, increase absorption of nutrients, and slow down your meal, making it easier to pause and take a breath, and stay out of that stress response while eating.

DANCE IT OFF

Got major stress? Crank up some music, and dance it off! Movement is a great way to flush out those stress chemicals building up in the body, and lift the mood. While cardio exercise in general can be a great mood boost, for some people with chronic illness, a lot of cardio can make things worse. But for many, taking 5 minutes to dance, not only doesn't FEEL like exercise, it's just enough to get a some benefit without overdoing it. You can dance at your own pace, ability etc. Just have fun moving!

Do please consult your doctor before adding in new movement, especially if you have chronic illness. You may need to work up even more gradually. I know my body's stamina, triggers, limits etc. Some days I can do one 3-4 minute song, on another day I might handle up to 10 minutes.

DIVE INTO A HOBBY

Whether you are an overachiever who forgets to pause and have fun, or have battled illness so long you have forgotten what IS fun, finding a new hobby, or dusting off an old one can be fabulous for reducing stress. If you struggle to know what you would like, think back to age 11. What did you love to do then? Does that appeal to you now? Is there anything similar you could try now?

Perhaps you'll have to find something new, if you are not able to resume a former favorite (like running marathons), what are some other things that interest you? Do you like to learn new things? Create with your hands? See new places? Sew? Take pictures? Talk to others? If you have never done the Gallup StrengthsFinder test, I begin all new clients with this test. It can be an eye opening look at how you are wired, and what makes you tic! There are also all kinds of ideas to find online. Make it priority to explore and see what makes you go "Oh! I want to try THAT!"

WHAT ARE THE FIRST IDEAS THAT POP INTO YOUR HEAD WHEN I SAY "CHOOSE A HOBBY?"

WHAT DID YOU LOVE TO DO AS A CHILD?

Lastly, how can you give yourself the time for this activity in your week? Schedule it in. Make it important. Your health is counting on you!

DROP NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

I listed this category last because it can take the most time. It definitely takes more practice to make it a habit. If health, or stress has driven you into long-time survival mode, the reality is, there is a lot that is truly hard right now. I am not talking about denying reality. Sometimes we have to acknowledge what is. And accept it, before we can move forward.

But if you are aware that your thoughts are stuck in a negative cycle, then this activity is for you. First, congratulations on the awareness, because being aware is ALWAYS the first step to change.

You can't address something you don't see! Acknowledging this pattern is a big deal, and I salute you!

Here are some ideas for you, with invitations to level up your game:

LEVEL 1:

When you have a negative thought, pause to be aware of it. Think about what triggered it. Be curious about where it came from. Don't judge it. It just is.

LEVEL 2:

Follow that up with a counter-thought. What else might be true? Or might ALSO be true? Sometimes negative thoughts are true, but often they are not the full truth. What positive thought can you replace that with right now, and if the same thought comes again?

LEVEL 3:

Carry a tiny notebook with you, and write down both the negative thought, and the replacement thought. Writing things makes a stronger impression in our brains.

LEVEL 4:

Write the negative thought on the bottom of the paper, and the positive one at the top. When you're done, rip off the bottom half and have fun getting rid of that negativity! I have shredded them, burnt them in a pot with a match; be creative about the physical act of getting rid of that thought you don't want to carry around any more. And feel a little more free every time you do it!

DELIGHT IN SOME MUSIC

We live in a world where the best music is always at our fingertips, and it is often playing in the background as a soundtrack to our lives. But sometimes, we forget the power of listening to music for music's sake. Now I am biased, as a musician and songwriter, but I am also guilty of letting this be pushed off my list of things to do in a day! As a recovering overachiever, stopping to just soak in some music, no matter how good it is for relieving stress, is easily postponed for "another time."

Music can be a powerful ally in Conscious Breathwork.

Singing stimulates the vagus nerve, the nerve that helps to switch us out of fight/flight and into rest/digest!

Pausing to give the mind and body a break, and just soaking in the sounds of beautiful music can be powerfully relaxing. Remember, a few minutes feeling relaxed will have a positive ripple effect into the rest of your day.

High energy music can be a great way to burn off some of the cortisol building up from stress.

DO THE THINGS

Lastly, you will find at the end of this kit some trackers to help you put into place the things that resonated with you. I want to remind you that one (or two) small actions deliberately added into your life at a time, will have a more lasting impact. And then you can layer in more things as you go! Knowledge does not equal change. It takes action.

OF ALL OF THE SUGGESTIONS ABOVE, WHICH ONES SOUND THE MOST FUN?

WHICH ONES SOUND THE HARDEST TO YOU?

IF I ASKED YOU TO CHOOSE ONE, (TWO AT THE VERY MOST), of these suggestions to incorporate into your life for the next week, which one would you choose? Print out the paper tracker (writing by hand has benefits!), or use the digital one if that's more your style, and write in the activity you want to incorporate for the coming week. You don't have to wait for a Monday, or a new month. Just start where you are.

REMINDERS

How will you remember to keep your commitment to yourself to do this one small thing? Do you need to write it into your calendar? What time of day is going to work for you? Do you need to set some phone alarms? Do you need an accountability buddy? If your goal is real change in your health, let this activity be as non-negotiable in your mind as paying a bill or keeping an appointment. Only you can shift your body out of stress and into better health.

SMALL HINGES SWING BIG DOORS!

I want to leave you with this statement one more time, because it is so easy to fall into the all-or-nothing trap...

SUSTAINABLE CHANGE COMES WITH LAYERING IN HABITS OVER TIME. AND IT INCLUDES GOOD SUPPORT AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

If you need some structure, support and accountability to help shift from overwhelm into action for your health, you can schedule a FREE 45 minute Discovery call with me at TheWholeYou.biz

I'd love to help you figure out what is holding you back, and to help provide some support and structure to help you put some "small hinges" in place for your health, so you can make some lasting changes.

**JUST BREATHE, A PIANO COMPOSITION BY SPRING ESPECIALLY FOR YOU,
TO AID IN RELAXATION OR BREATH WORK.**

ENJOY!

<https://youtu.be/Y33emGjYXEI>

D-Stress Tracker

Habits This Month:

The form is a semi-circular grid designed for tracking stress levels over a month. It features a central circular logo with a pink circle and eight colorful petals (blue, light blue, green, light green, yellow, light yellow, orange, and pink). The grid is divided into three concentric rings. The outermost ring contains numbers 1 through 31, representing the days of the month. The middle ring is divided into 10 columns, with the first column labeled '1', the second '2', and the third '3'. The innermost ring is divided into 10 columns, with the first column labeled '4', the second '5', and the third '6'. The grid is intended for recording stress levels on a scale of 1 to 10 for each day.

THE WHOLE YOU

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