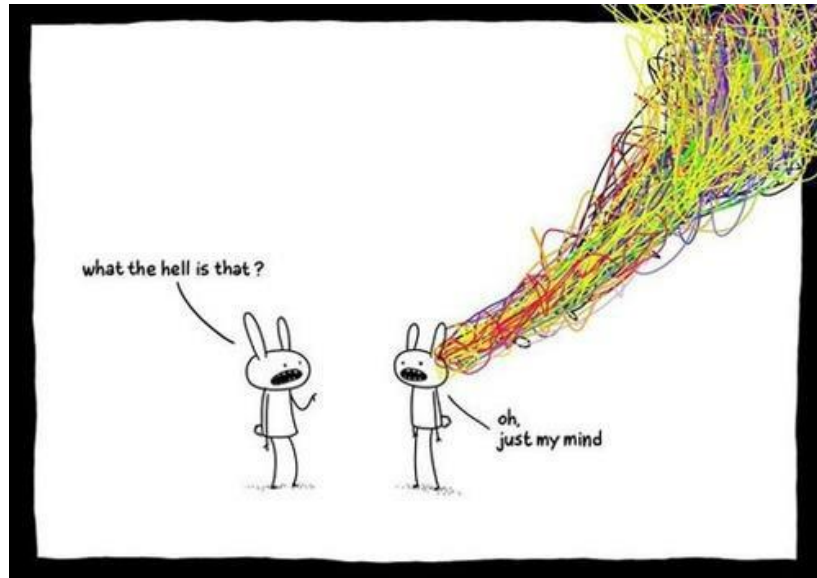




A few simple exercises can help you quiet the mind and reach a place of calm presence anytime, anywhere, invisibly. Pick one to practice three times a day. You don't have to be perfect—just be present.



A. Square Breathing

1. Inhale 2 3 4
2. Hold 2 3 4
3. Exhale 2 3 4
4. Hold 2 3 4
5. You can also extend each of the four segments for as long as you like.

B. A Simple Breathing Exercise to Calm your Mind and Body—Dr. Robin Berzyn

When your exhale even a few counts longer than your inhale, the vagus nerve (running from the neck down through the diaphragm) signals your brain to turn up your parasympathetic (“rest and digest”) nervous system and turn down the sympathetic nervous system, which commands your fight or flight response.

When the parasympathetic system is dominant, your breathing slows and both your heart rate and blood pressure lower as the blood vessels relax. Your body is put into a state of calm and healing. Putting your body in a parasympathetic state is easy. **Pick a count for your inhale and a count for your exhale that is a little longer. Start with 2 counts in, and 4 counts out, with a one-count pause at the top of the inhale and at the bottom of the exhale. As you exhale, make it a loud sigh, as a dog makes when lying down on a rug to sleep.**



C. 5-4-3-2-1 coping technique for easing anxiety

- 5: acknowledge FIVE THINGS YOU SEE around you. A pen, a tree, your cat.
- 4: acknowledge FOUR THINGS YOU CAN TOUCH around you...
- 3: acknowledge THREE THINGS YOU HEAR...
- 2: acknowledge TWO THINGS YOU CAN SMELL...
- 1: acknowledge ONE THING YOU CAN TASTE.

Rest in your open senses and say to yourself, all this, just this, right now.

D. Practice the 3-3-3 rule

1. Look around and name three things you see.
2. Then, notice and name three things you hear—near or far, human or mechanical, loud or soft
3. Finally, move three parts of your body—wiggle your fingers, stretch your spine, whatever feels good to you.

This is a quick and easy way to bring your racing mind back to the present moment.

E. And, a nice quick one (*Abigail Steadley, master Mind/Body Coach*)

1. Sit squarely. Notice your feet; feel them touching the floor. Rest your hands on your knees, palms up and open
2. Take three big belly breaths, in through your nose, out through your mouth
3. While breathing deeply but normally, notice the insides of your hands.
4. Rest that way a moment. Boom! Done.

F. A deeper dive: Follow your own bloodstream

([Finding Your Way in a Wild New World](#), Martha Beck, Ph.D.)

1. Take a few full, deep breaths. Exhale completely; pause before inhaling.
2. In the space before you need to breathe again, **focus your attention on your heart** until you can feel it beating. This may take up to a minute.
3. Take another breath and exhale. Along with your heartbeat, **find the sensation of your pulse** moving through your hands, feet, scalp, entire body.
4. Stay focused on the feeling of your entire circulatory system as it channels your lifeblood to your head and extremities. See if you can feel it moving through your organs as well.
5. Perform some simple task--walking, washing the dishes, making your bed--while continuing to feel your heartbeat and overall pulse. It may feel strangely blissful.



G. What is self-compassion, and why is it important?

<https://self-compassion.org/the-three-elements-of-self-compassion-2/>

“Instead of mercilessly judging and criticizing yourself for various inadequacies or shortcomings, self-compassion means you are kind and understanding when confronted with personal failings. After all, who ever said you were supposed to be perfect?” --Dr. Kristen Neff

Three elements of self-compassion:

1. Self-kindness vs. self-judgment
2. Common humanity vs. isolation
3. Mindfulness vs. over-identification (with thoughts or the circumstances)

What self-compassion is not:

1. Letting ourselves “off the hook.” Western culture trains us that self-denial and self-flagellation lead to greater effort and results, but research proves the opposite is true.
2. Self-pity, which immerses us in our own problems and makes us forget others have troubles, too.
3. Self-indulgence. Just giving oneself pleasure may cause harm in the long term, while self-compassion takes the long view to make you happy and healthy over time.
4. Self-esteem. In Western culture, self-esteem is based on how we are different from others, how we stand out or are special. Self-compassion reconnects us to others.

H. Meditation: Be Kind to Yourself, by Dr. Kristen Neff, Lion’s Roar 2.14.17

1. Put both hands on your heart, pause, and feel their warmth. You can also put your hand anyplace on your body that feels soothing and comforting, like your belly or face.
2. Breathe deeply in and out.
3. Speak these words to yourself, out loud or silently, in a warm and caring tone:

***This is a moment of suffering.
Suffering is a part of life.
May I be kind to myself in this moment.
May I give myself the compassion I need.***

The first phrase, *This is a moment of suffering*, is designed to bring mindfulness to the fact that you’re in pain. Other possible wordings are *I’m having a really tough time right now*, *This hurts*, or anything that describes the suffering you are experiencing.



The second phrase, *Suffering is a part of life*, reminds you that imperfection is part of the shared human experience. Other possible wordings are *Everyone feels this way sometimes*, *This is part of being human*, etc.

The third phrase, *May I be kind to myself in this moment*, helps bring a sense of caring concern to your present-moment experience. Other possible wordings are *May I love and support myself right now*, *May I accept myself as I am*, etc.

The final phrase, *May I give myself the compassion I need*, firmly sets your intention to be self-compassionate. You might use other words such as *May I remember that I am worthy of compassion*, *May I give myself the same compassion I would give to a good friend*, etc.

Find the wordings for these four phrases that are the most comfortable for you and memorize them. Then, the next time you judge yourself or have a difficult experience, you can use these phrases as a way of reminding yourself to be self-compassionate. This practice is a handy tool to soothe and calm troubled states of mind.



Here's to your resilience! --EBH