

# 5 WAYS TO INSTANTLY CALM THE MIND



# Introduction

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Too many of us are too stressed, too often.

This is simply a product of the world we live in. Most of us work extremely hard, performing a job that is highly stressful. We have deadlines, we have people shouting at us, we have threats of termination. And our lifestyles – probably the happiness and health of our family, or future family – is riding on our success.

We then commute home through busy streets/on a busy train. Then we have 20 chores to do when all we really want to do is to crash out in front of the TV. The baby is crying, friends are upset we can't make it out, and the pile of plates on the sink is growing.

Meanwhile, we are all too aware of all the things that we *should* be doing, but can't/aren't. On Instagram, it seems that everyone is out there finding love or travelling the world. The covers of magazines show us perfect, beautiful people.

And heck, we're not getting any younger!

To make ourselves feel better, we turn on the TV. There we hear about all the calamities happening all around the world



and feel petrified by fright. Also, did you know that the very *light* from the television increases your production of cortisol – the primary stress hormone?

Oh, and that bag of chips you're eating is only going to artificially spike your blood sugar, causing a subsequent crash and surge of cortisol.

So yeah – it's a wonder that more of us aren't in a state of *permanent panic attack*.

If you want to feel happier. If you want to actually enjoy your life.

And if you want to make positive progress to improving your situation moving forward...

If you want to do all of this, then you need to make sure that you are finding ways to overcome this stress. And I'm not necessarily talking long term – but short term even.

Here are five extremely simply things you can do *right now* that will immediately improve your sense of calm and help you to relax.

Read on and you will have five extremely powerful tools in your arsenal to calm the mind whenever you think it is necessary.

# 5 Powerful Strategies

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Following are five extremely effective strategies for quickly feeling calmer and better. Find the one that works best for you, or use them in conjunction with one another for even greater effect.

## Control Your Breathing

The first thing you can try doing is to control your breathing. This is highly effective due to the two-way link between your breathing, and your vagus nerve. The vagus nerve is a nerve that is highly responsible for the action of the autonomic nervous system – the part of your system that is responsible for handling such things as your fight or flight response. This includes the sympathetic and parasympathetic systems.

When you are in a state of fight or flight, your sympathetic nervous system goes into overdrive sensing danger. The result is that you start to breathe more quickly, blood gets delivered to your muscles and brain, your blood viscosity increases (to help clot wounds), and your thoughts start to race. From an evolutionary perspective, this should occur only when in physical danger – but today many other ‘low level’ things can set it off. The result is that we’re always a little tense and anxious.

At the other end of the spectrum, we have the parasympathetic system. This is responsible for the state known as 'rest and digest', which helps to increase anabolism (muscle and tissue building), to calm the mind, and to strengthen the immune system. This is the state we go into when we are fed and in no immediate danger. Breathing slows down, as does our heartrate.

Notice how the breathing an the heartrate are affected strongly in both cases. This occurs through that vagus nerve, but what's interesting, is that you can also send the signal the other way: calm down your breathing, and you will also calm down the vagus nerve and the nervous system!

So if you find yourself hyperventilating and panicking, one of the very best things you can do to get yourself back under control is to try breathing more calmly.

This method is even used by the military and special forces, in what is known as 'box breathing'. Box breathing is so called because it has 'four sides' or four seconds.

- Breathe in for four seconds
- Hold for four seconds
- Breathe out for four seconds
- Hold for four seconds

Do this for a couple of minutes and you'll find that your heartrate slows down and your biochemistry changes in order to help you keep a more level head. This is ideal before an interview as well, and can even be useful in staving off a panic attack.

The rest of the time, it is important to ensure you employ deep 'belly breathing' which allows you to draw more air into the lungs and the abdominal cavity beneath them. Many of us have made a habit of shallow breathing only using the top of the lungs. This actually *increases* stress throughout the day. Kundalini meditation and yoga can help to teach you to correct this issue.

## Try Some Meditation

That box breathing could be considered an example of a type of meditation. That's because you are focussing on an aspect of yourself in order to take your thoughts *away* from stress and panic. Doing so is often enough to make you feel instantly calmer again. This is a secondary benefit, along with the way it communicates directly with your autonomic nervous system.

That's all that meditation really is: focus. It's about focussing on something that you've chosen to focus on, rather than letting your thoughts run away with you and onto all kinds of disparate topics.

But there are other forms of meditation that can be even more effective. Take the body scan meditation for instance, which involves focussing on your muscles instead, and on helping yourself to get calmer and more relaxed. This can be an ideal method to use just before bed.

The idea behind a body scan meditation, is to turn your attention to each part of your body in turn, and to help it relax. You do this by first contracting (tensing up) the muscle, and then releasing all that tension and making a conscious effort to allow it to happen fully.

This not only distracts your mind from whatever other worries you were thinking about, but also helps to release stored tension that can cause discomfort and make you feel more stressed.

It's called a body 'scan' because you will be moving your attention first from the top of your head, all the way down to your toes. So start by thinking about your forehead and ears. Are they holding any tension? Contract them, release them, then imagine them completely melting and dissolving. Now do your mouth and jaw, now your neck and shoulders, and so forth.

This is a great option to use just before going to sleep.

## Have a Smoothie

Okay, so this one might seem a little less game-changing than a breathing technique used by the special forces!

In fact though, having a smoothie can be *just* as effective at combating your stress on multiple different fronts.

Firstly, when you drink a smoothie, you will be elevating your blood sugar. This is important because it helps you to control your own hormone balance – which is closely connected to appetite and diet.

You see, when we don't eat enough, our bodies don't have enough sugar and respond by increasing cortisol. It's essentially saying: get out there and find something to eat!

We don't interpret it as that though. Rather, we interpret it as a kind of shakiness and anxiety that we can't quite put our fingers on. And here's the thing: when you have cortisol in your blood, everything seems to be a little worse. We think that our thoughts control our moods, but very often the relationship works in reverse: our moods control our thoughts. Suddenly, things start to seem terrible and we find ourselves worrying without knowing why.

But you have that smoothie and what happens? The body processes the sugar, which in turn triggers a release of



tryptophan (as a byproduct). This reaches the brain, where it is converted into serotonin – the feel good hormone!

What's more, is that the vitamin C found in smoothie *a/so* helps to improve your mood and is also used in the synthesis of serotonin.

Then there are all the other beneficial micronutrients in smoothie that the brain uses in order to ensure order. In short, this is a 'pick me up' that does much more than just taste good – it provides energy, and nourishment, and sometimes helps to solve the problem in the simplest way possible!

## **Go for a Walk or Jog**

Another option is to go for a walk. Many people say that going for a walk will help to 'clear their heads' and there are plenty of reasons why this works.

For one, walking is a kind of mindless activity that engages the brain's default mode network: the network that is used when we are daydreaming or thinking about non-important things. This also happens to be our most inventive and creative brain state.

You can actually turn this into a form of moving meditation – by focussing on the environment and drinking it in without

letting your own thoughts get in the way. Many people find running meditative in particular, especially once they hit a rhythm and can concentrate on their foot strides.

At the same time, being in the sun can help to boost the mood. This is particularly true for anyone who suffers from SAD – Seasonal Affective Disorder. The fresh air helps too – filling our lungs and brains with energy.

But if you can find somewhere scenic to walk, then this will help even further. You'll be able to look around at the grass and trees and just experience being away from the urban bustle. Not only does the quiet do you good, but we have an evolutionary response to greenery that makes us feel calm and at peace. This is because once upon a time, finding trees and grass meant food and shelter. Even today, the result is the same – and some studies show that looking at *the color green* alone is enough to lower the heart rate.

## **Read a Good Book**

Finally, you could try reading a good book – even just for ten minutes.

This is a good way to put you in a calmer state of mind, partly because it means you'll be entertained by something you enjoy. But what's more, is that reading is almost like a form of meditation in its own right. When you read, your

attention needs to be 100% on the passage of text in front of you. This means that you can't worry about anything, or let your mind wander elsewhere, which in turn means you aren't going to be stressed.

Have you ever looked up from a good book and found yourself disoriented – unsure what time it is? This is because your consciousness has been entirely engrossed in that book – something that rarely happens under normal circumstances. The same thing can happen to an extent with a good movie, but reading is even better at it because it actually takes over your 'inner monologue'.

## **Closing Comments**

These are just a few examples of things you can do to quickly calm your mind. There are of course other forms of meditation to try, massage, warm baths, and power naps – to name just a few.

In the full eBook: *The Calm Mind*, you will learn how to control your thoughts through CBT, various forms of meditation, and an honest appraisal of your lifestyle and priorities. When you can do that, you can find peace and calm wherever you are. As such, you perform better, and feel the best you've ever felt.