



PEAK EXPERIENCES

Re-Wiring the Brain – Ways to Effective Calm Down & Self-Regulate

Calming down is the first step in re-wiring the brain, staying or getting out of an amygdala hijack and reducing negative stress in your life. The following articles recommends ways to;

1. Calm Down Quickly
2. Calming Down Quickly During A Stressful Event
3. Improving Your Calm
4. Handling Upsetting Situations
5. How to Stay Calm and Deal with an Angry Person
6. How to Get Additional Help

How to Calm Down Quickly

1. Stop what you're doing.

One of the best ways to calm down is to stop interacting with what's upsetting you. In the short term, this may mean telling the person you're speaking with that you need to take a quick break. If you're with company, politely excuse yourself for a moment. Get to a quiet place away from what's upsetting you and focus on calming thoughts.

2. Re-focus your senses.

When we're anxious, upset, or angry, our bodies go into "flight or fight" mode. Our sympathetic nervous system kicks our bodies into high gear by activating hormones like adrenaline. These hormones boost your heart rate and breathing, tense your muscles, and constrict blood vessels. Take a break from what is causing this stress response and focus on what your body is experiencing. This can help you stay in the present and reduce what's known as "automatic reactivity." "Automatic reactivity" happens when your brain forms habits of reacting to stimuli, such as stressors. Your brain activates these habitual pathways whenever it encounters that stimulus. Studies have shown that breaking the circuit of this reaction by refocusing on what your sensory experiences actually are can help your brain make new "habits." Don't judge your experiences, just acknowledge them. For example, if you're really angry about something someone just said, your heart is probably beating faster, and your face may be flushed or feel hot. Acknowledge these sensory details, but don't judge them as being "wrong" or "right."

3. Breathe.

When your body's sympathetic nervous system is activated by stress, one of the first things to go is your calm, even breathing. Focusing on breathing deeply and evenly has a host of benefits. It restores oxygen to your body, regulates your brain's brainwaves, and decreases the level of lactate in your blood. These things help you feel calm and relaxed. Breathe from your diaphragm, not your upper chest. Sit upright, stand, or lie flat on your back to help your chest stay open. It's harder to breathe when you're slouched. Inhale slowly through your nose for a count of 10. You should feel your lungs and belly expand as they fill with air. Then, slowly exhale through your nose or mouth. Aim for 6-10 deep, cleansing breaths per minute. Focus on the rhythm of your breathing. Try not to let yourself get distracted by anything else, including how upset you might feel. You can count your breaths if you feel yourself getting distracted, or repeat a calming word or phrase. Repeat 3 or 4 times. Use the following resource app for breathing support: MyCalmBeat

4. Relax your muscles.

When emotional or stress responses occur, your body's muscles tense and tighten. You may literally feel "wound up." Progressive Muscle Relaxation, or PMR, can help you consciously release the tension in your body by tensing and then releasing particular muscle groups. With a little practice, PMR can help you bust stress and anxiety very quickly. There are several free guided PMR routines available online. MIT has a free eleven-minute audio guide to PMR. Find a quiet, comfortable place. It should be relatively dark. Lie down or sit comfortably. Loosen or remove tight clothing. Focus on a particular muscle group. You can start at your toes and work up, or start with your forehead and work down. Tense all the muscles in that group as hard as you can. For example, if you're starting with your head, raise your eyebrows as far as they will go and open your eyes wide. Hold for 5 seconds, then release. Squeeze your eyes shut tightly. Hold for 5 seconds, then release. Move to the next muscle group and tense those muscles. For example, purse your lips tightly for 5 seconds, then release. Then, smile as wide as you can for 5 seconds, then release. Progress through the rest of your muscle groups, such as neck, shoulders, arms, chest, stomach, buttocks, thighs, lower legs and toes.

5. Distract yourself.

If you can, distract yourself from worrying over what has you upset. If you allow yourself to focus on what has upset you, you could set off a cycle of ruminating, where you think the same thoughts over and over again. Ruminating fosters anxiety and depressive symptoms. Distraction is not a long-term solution, but it can be a good way to get your mind off your troubles long enough for you to calm down. Then, you can return to deal with the issue with a clear head. Chat with a friend. Socializing with someone you love will help take your mind off what has upset you and will help you feel more relaxed. Watch a happy movie or a funny TV show. "Silly humour" can help calm you down and get some distances from what's upset you. Listen to some soothing music. Look at pictures that give you a lift. Go somewhere and shake all your limbs, like a wet dog does. "Shaking it off" may help you feel better because it gives your brain new sensations to process.

6. Use self-soothing behaviours.

Self-soothing behaviours can help you reduce immediate feelings of stress and anxiety. They focus on comforting and being kind to yourself. Take a warm bath or a hot shower. Research has shown that physical warmth has a soothing effect on many people. Use calming essential oils, such as lavender and chamomile. Play with your pet. Petting your dog or cat has a soothing effect and can even lower your blood pressure.

7. Use soothing touch.

When humans are touched with kindness, our bodies release oxytocin, a powerful mood elevator. While you can also get this boost from a friendly hug (or sex with someone you love), you can also relax yourself with your own touch. Put your hand over your heart. Focus on the warmth of your skin and the beat of your heart. Allow yourself to breathe slowly and evenly. Feel your chest expand as you inhale and fall as you exhale. Cup your face with your hands. You can stroke the muscles of your jaw or near your eyes with your fingertips. Run your hands through your hair. Give yourself a scalp massage.

8. Do progressive muscle relaxation.

Start by tightening and releasing the muscle groups in order from your head to your toes. Begin by focusing on your facial muscles, tightening them for 6 seconds and then letting the muscles release for 6 seconds. Repeat this with your neck muscles, shoulders, chest, arms, and so forth down the body until your body feels more relaxed. Progressive muscle relaxation can reduce muscle tension. This can reduce your anxiety and feelings of anger, helping you calm down.

9. Be mindful of your surroundings and body sensations.

Mindfulness can be used to gently quiet the mind by bringing your attention to your sensations and surroundings. Start focusing on sounds, the temperature, what you smell or feel, and your breathing. Focus on these things until you start to relax. This can quiet your mind and research shows that it can reduce stress, lower blood pressure, and help with chronic pain. This can help you have more emotional control and awareness. The body physically responds to strong emotions by making you feel out of control. It secretes adrenaline, which is released into your bloodstream. Adrenaline increases your heart rate, muscle strength, and blood pressure, which is your body's way of preparing for a "fight or flight" response.

Calming Down Quickly During A Stressful Event

1. Take deep breaths.

Slowly inhale and exhale. Deep breaths naturally calm your muscles and nerves to relax your body. This can also lower your blood pressure.

2. Distract yourself.

It's easy for your thoughts to run in circles about what could go wrong. Change your thought pattern by: Tracing a figure-eight on the palm of your hand. Counting backwards from 100. Thinking of something funny: everyone in their underwear if you're performing, a funny joke you heard recently or comic strip that you read, or a funny commercial from TV.

If you are in a group meeting, quietly 'count and label' ten different things in the room. This simple exercise helps with distraction allow you to calm down and re-focus.

3. Visualize being in a place that relaxes you.

Where you imagine may be different for each person, but some ideas are: Imagine being far away on a desert island, relaxing in the sun on the beach, listening to the surf of the waves. Imagine being in a meadow, feeling the breeze, the warmth of the sun, watching the clouds pass by, smelling the sweet aroma of the flowers and grass.

4. Focus.

Keeping your mind on the task at hand, on your goals, and not on your worries, will help the stressful event to go by more quickly and will make it more enjoyable. Focus on the strategy you have been taught and what has worked for you in the past.

5. Get enough sleep. (Being tired increased triggers)

Get 7-8 hours each night, or however much you need to feel rested. Not sleeping enough is like a vicious cycle: if you are stressed, you may not sleep well; if you don't sleep well, you may feel more stressed. If you're having difficulty falling asleep due to stress, you can: Drink chamomile tea. This is a pleasant relaxant. Avoid bright lights or any noise at least an hour before bed. This includes TV. Spend your last hour before going to sleep doing something quiet, like reading or meditating in dim lights. Stop thinking about falling asleep.

Worrying about it can keep you up longer. Let your mind wander. If you still can't fall asleep, get up and do something un-stimulating (reading) for a while until you feel tired again.

6. Be prepared.

It seems obvious, but the more prepared you are for a certain stress-inducing activity, the more likely you are to do well because you will feel more confident. It's like having a healthy mature line ready in response or having your body ready for a verbal attack... if you are ready for it, your response will be much more effective.

7. Eat a healthy, balanced diet. (Being hungry increased emotional triggers)

Eat three meals a day, especially breakfast. Throughout the day you should be sure to have plenty of healthy snacks to keep your energy up. Avoid "stress" eating. For more detail information on nutrition, check-out our article on nutrition in our on-line post workshop resource room in the "growth section."

8. Stay hydrated.

Dehydration quickly causes headaches and just generally feeling bad, which can contribute to stress. Drink 8 glasses of water (8 oz.) each day. Plain water is best, but you can also drink unsweetened herbals teas and 100% fruit or vegetable juices

9. Limit your caffeine and alcohol intake.

These can dehydrate you and they also contribute quite a bit to stress. Sometimes people drink alcohol as a way to deal with stress, and this habit is not only unhealthy but it is dangerous and can lead to much higher stress in the long run. Caffeine may make you feel alert and good at first, but studies have shown that consuming too much of it does actually contribute to stress because it physically raises your heart rate.

10. Exercise regularly.

Working out is a great way to relieve stress and to make you more likely to get enough sleep. Get at least 20 minutes of moderate cardio exercise (walking, swimming, biking, running) at least 3-4 times a week. For more detail information on nutrition, check-out our article on exercise / movement in our on-line post workshop resource room in the "growth section."

11. Practice yoga.

Many studies have been done showing the health benefits and stress decreasing qualities of yoga. While there are many different types of yoga, most incorporate breathing exercises, meditation, and stretches in for various muscle groups. Yoga can increase your energy, help with weight loss, lessen chronic pain, reduce insomnia, improve athletic performance, and help you gain a positive outlook on life. There's no reason not to try it!

12. Socialize and Connect. (Being lonely increased emotional triggers)

Recent studies have showed that spending time with your best friends can help reduce overall stress and also buffer the effects of negative experiences. So pick up the phone and start making some plans to hang out and connect. Make sure the people that you spend time with make you feel good about yourself and are people you can laugh and have fun with.

13. Unplug occasionally - Connect with Nature

This may sound contradictory to the previous step, but it isn't. Spending quality time with friends is important; being constantly plugged in (available to work, text, email, be on social media) actually is not healthy. Take active steps toward making time where you are unreachable. Some jobs can make this difficult to do, but your lower stress level will make it worth it. Once unplugged, you can spend quality time with people you love, spend time outside in nature, or do relaxing things.

15. Get a massage.

If you can afford to pay for one, do it. If you have a partner who will give you one for free, try that. Massages are incredibly relaxing and help manage stress. They also can help with lower back pain and a number of other health problems. Be sure to drink lots of water after getting a massage, because toxins in your muscles are released during the process and they need to be flushed out.

16. Think positively about yourself.

If you find that you think thoughts about yourself that include words like “never” and “worst,” it’s time to change that. Would most other people you know agree with you if you said those things out loud? Probably not. (If so, it may be time to examine the company you keep). Tell yourself that you are competent and can handle things, and watch your stress level go down

Improving Your Calm

1. Meditate.

Meditation has a long and respected history in Eastern traditions. Scientific studies have also shown that meditation can promote relaxation and feelings of well-being. It can even rewire how your brain deals with outside stimuli. There are many types of meditation, although “mindfulness” meditation is one of the types with the most research support. You don’t even have to leave your house to learn how to meditate. MIT has several downloadable meditation MP3 files. So does the UCLA Mindful Awareness Research Center.

2. Think about what made you upset. The important ‘why.’

Stressors can build up so gradually that we are not even aware of them. In many cases, it’s not one big event that makes you lose your cool but a mountain of small annoyances and irritations that have built up over time. Try to distinguish between primary and secondary emotions. For example, if you were supposed to meet a friend at the movies and s/he never showed, you might immediately feel hurt. That would be the primary emotion. You might then feel frustrated, disappointed, or angry. These would be the secondary emotions.

3. Own your emotion in 90 seconds.

Having an idea of the source of your feelings can help you figure out why you’re experiencing these feelings. More often than not, you’ll feel more than one thing at once. Try to sort through what you are feeling and give each experience a name. Once you have named and owned your emotion, you will have a better sense of how to handle it. One common reason people feel upset is that they believe things ought to go a certain way (usually, their way). Remind yourself that you will never be able to control everything in life -- nor should you want to. Don’t judge these emotional responses. Acknowledge, try to understand them and allow yourself to “own your emotions.” Then you can use your emotions to consciously make a more rationale decision. If you don’t own your emotion in 90 seconds, it often goes unconscious and then you trigger and have an amygdala hijack.

4. Connect and Reach out for support.

Spend time with others who calm you. Research has shown that humans tend to let others’ emotions “rub off” on us. The anxiety levels of those we spend time with can affect our own. Spend time with people whom you find relaxing and calming, and you’ll feel more calm yourself. Try to spend time with people whom you feel support you. Feeling isolated or judged can increase feelings of stress.

5. Avoid upsetting scenarios when possible.

Obviously, it's impossible to never become upset. Experiencing unpleasant or troubling events and experiences is part of being human. However, if you are able to remove stressors from your life, you will be able to better handle the ones that you simply can't avoid. You can try to "outsmart" upsetting situations. For example, if you find getting stuck in rush hour traffic upsetting -- and who doesn't? -- you could consider leaving earlier or later from work, or find an alternate route. Look for the bright side. Reframing upsetting situations as learning experiences can help you stay calm because you're giving yourself some power. Rather than just being something that happens to you, the situation becomes something you can use to learn for the future. If people are upsetting you, consider why. What exactly about their behaviour is bothering you? Are you doing the same things as they are? Trying to understand a person's motivation may help keep you from being as upset. Remember, we're all human, and we all have bad days.

6. Process and Express your feelings.

There is nothing inherently unhealthy with any emotion, including anger. What can be unhealthy is ignoring or repressing your feelings instead of acknowledging them. Acknowledging your feelings doesn't mean you mope or feel sorry for yourself, or that you blow your lid and rage at others. Instead, you acknowledge that you are human, and that experiencing a range of emotions is natural for humans. Your feelings occur, and they should not be judged. Your responses to your emotions are what you're in charge of.

Once you have acknowledged your feelings, think about how you can respond to them. For example, it may be perfectly natural to feel angry if your contribution to a big project has been overlooked, or if a romantic partner has broken trust with you. However, you have a choice whether you let your anger explode, or whether you use techniques such as those in this article to calm yourself down and handle your feelings with care.

7. Talk to a relative or friend.

Not only will talking about your anger or anxiety help you calm down, but it can also make you feel supported by others. You'll recognize that you're not alone. Social support is important for making you feel secure and accepted. Talking can also increase your self-worth, help you vent, and distract you. Don't forget, it may even make you laugh, which reduces stress too.

8. Know when to reach out for more professional support.

See a therapist or counsellor. A common myth is that you have to have huge "issues" to see a therapist, but this isn't true. A therapist can help you process your feelings and learn to cope with even everyday anxiety and stress in more healthy, helpful ways. Many organizations provide therapy and counselling services. Contact a community clinic or health center, hospital, or even a private provider for services.

9. Write in a journal.

Try to write descriptively about how you feel. This is a good way to confront your emotions, especially if you're naturally inclined to write. Don't worry about writing complete grammatically correct sentences. You could even just write down phrases or words, if it helps calm you down. It's the process of thinking and recording your conflicts that is most important. Keeping a journal can also keep you from dwelling on things that bother you. Once you've written down the issue and your feelings, you can begin moving on.

10. Develop a positive and constructive mindset.

Cultivating a positive and constructive attitude can help you remember the good times and let go of things that you cannot control. Once you realize you can't control every situation, you can focus on managing your own emotions. This can help you take a step back and calm down. If you're struggling to stay positive, pretend like you're a happy calm person. Be consistent with this and eventually, you'll see most situations in a positive light.

11. Create or find a relaxing place.

While this may be different for each person, know where to head when you start feeling overwhelmed. For example, you may want to escape to nature. Spend time watching or soaking in water and let it calm your mood. Or, maybe you'd feel more relaxed by surrounding yourself with people who respect and support you. Avoid spending too much time with people who get you worked up and who trigger you. If you can, avoid these stressful situations until you are better positioned to deal with them effectively.

Handling Upsetting Situations

1. Practice STOPP-ing.

STOPP is a handy acronym to help you remember to keep your calm in a situation. It has five easy steps:

Stop your immediate reaction. "Automatic thoughts" are habits of thinking that we've become accustomed to over our lives, but they're often damaging. Stop what you're doing and wait to react for a moment.

Take a breath. Use the deep breathing techniques in this article to take a few deep, calming breaths. You'll think better afterward.

Observe what's happening. Ask yourself what you're thinking, what you're focusing on, what you're reacting to, and what sensations you're experiencing in your body.

Pull back from the situation. Look at the bigger picture. Are your thoughts fact-based, or opinion? Is there another way to look at the situation? How do your reactions affect others? How would I want others to react here? How important is this, really?

Practice what works. Consider what the consequences of your actions are, for you and for others. What's the best way to handle this? Choose what will be most helpful.

2. Watch out for personalization.

One common distortion in our thinking habits is personalization, where we make ourselves responsible for things that are not our responsibility. This can lead to us feeling angry and upset, because we can't control others' actions. We can, however, control our responses. You have a choice: you can react automatically, or you can stop and think about what might really be going on. However, by reminding yourself that you can't control others' actions and they're often not about you, you can learn to calm down more quickly.

3. Steer conversations away from upsetting topics.

A sure-fire way to get the blood boiling is to talk about topics you feel strongly about with someone who feels equally strongly on the opposite side. If you feel able to have a productive discussion with someone, that's fine. If the conversation feels like it's two opposing monologues, try diverting the topic to something less incendiary. It can feel uncomfortable to suggest a change of topic, but the relief from the stress and tension is well worth the momentary awkwardness.

4. Avoid too much negativity.

Exposure to too much negativity can actually cause problems in how you think, learn, and remember information. Constant exposure to negativity will encourage your brain to make a habit of negative thinking. Like any other emotions, complaining and negativity are also contagious. Even 30 minutes of a stressor such as listening to someone complain can elevate your cortisol levels, a stress hormone that makes it harder to think calmly. Try to think about situations productively instead. It's normal to feel frustrated when situations go badly. A momentary venting of feelings can be helpful. However, it's more helpful in the long run to think about what you can change in a given situation to make it work better next time than it is to focus on how badly things already went wrong.

How to Stay Calm and Deal with an Angry Person

1. Avoid a fight.

When someone else is at a boiling point, getting equally angry is only going to make matters worse. Focus on keeping yourself calm, or else the situation might quickly spiral into an argument. This is not to say you should act completely unemotional, but try not to let your own feelings get too heated. A way to remain neutral is to let go of your own ego and not take things personally. It can be natural to respond to an angry person by defending yourself or your reputation, but it's important to remember that someone who is very angry cannot be reasoned with until they have calmed down.

2. Try not to get defensive.

When someone's so mad they can barely speak in a level tone, it's easy to absorb that negativity and feel defensive. When you're communicating with someone who is angry, realize that the anger is likely not about you. Separate the person's emotions from your own so you can be there for the person without feeling the anger is directed toward you.

3. Stay in the present.

People who are angry will often bring up situations or conversations from the past, particularly if they are trying to draw you into their anger. Try to counteract that by keeping them focused on the present situation and solving a solution to the current problem. Don't let yourself get drawn in to feeling angry about past events. If the conversation seems to be drifting towards past events, try saying something like, "We can talk about that later. I think right now, we should focus on what is immediately upsetting you and finding a solution to that problem. Let's take one thing at a time."

4. Stay calm and quiet.

If someone is yelling or venting, you can decide to let them vent to blow off steam, but the best thing for you to do is to remain quiet or to say nothing. If you do speak, keep a quiet level voice. If you remain quiet, try to keep a neutral facial expression and open body language. You remain in more control if you do not react to the "bait" of the person yelling. There is a difference between letting someone vent and being the victim of verbal abuse. If the person is berating you, calling you names, or directing unrelated anger towards you, you may want to make a statement such as, "I understand that you are frustrated, I would like to be here for you. But please do not take your anger out on me."

5. Don't say, "calm down."

Someone who is really angry is being ruled by his emotions and is not accessing the rational part of his brain. (they may be in an amygdala hijack.) Trying to use reason or making suggestions to "remain calm" or "be reasonable" are likely to fuel the fire and make the person feel invalidated.

6. Use good listening techniques.

When people are feeling emotional they want to know someone else understands. Really listen to the person talk. Look him or her in the eye, nod when appropriate, and ask questions to find out more. The act of conversing and feeling heard could help the person calm down. Of course, sometimes angry people don't want to be asked questions, and they might feel so angry they don't believe anyone can really understand. All you can do is try your best; if the person isn't in the mood for a heart-to-heart, don't force it.

7. Validate the person's feelings.

Everyone gets emotional or angry from time to time. Sometimes anger actually 'masks' another emotion, like feeling hurt, embarrassed, or sad. Whatever the reason for the person's anger, listen to him and respond by validating his feelings (without necessarily agreeing with him). You should also withhold judgment of the person, as judging will likely come through in your words or body language as a lack of support. An example of validating someone's emotions is making statements like "that must be difficult" or "I understand how you could be frustrated." Statements that are not as helpful include "you should let it go" or "I experienced the same thing and got over it."

8. Show empathy.

Empathy can take the form of understanding another's perspective, feeling distress at the plight of another person, and being able to relate to the emotions of another. Showing empathy towards someone who is angry may take the form of showing that you have been listening to him and know what he is saying. To empathize with someone who is angry, try paraphrasing the source of their anger back to them. You might say, "So, you are saying that you feel angry because you think you have to take on all of the household responsibilities alone." You may be inclined to say, "I understand how you feel," but know that this can sometimes make someone more angry. They may believe that no one really knows how they feel.

Brené Brown on Empathy

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Evwgu369Jw>

9. Lighten the situation with humor.

You may have to read the situation or know the angry person fairly well to determine whether this approach will work. Humor can effectively fight anger because it changes the chemical processes in the body. Making a joke or stopping and pointing out something funny in the situation and getting both of you laughing can diffuse the situation and could potentially snap the person out of his anger.

10. Give the person some space.

Some people are talkers, and some people prefer to process their emotions alone. If the idea of talking it out just seems to make the person madder, give them some space and time instead. Most people take at least 18-20 minutes to calm down from anger, but some may need even longer. If you think someone needs some time alone, try saying, "I understand that you are angry, but I don't feel like I am helping you feel any better, and I think you may need a few minutes to yourself. I'll be right here for you if or when you feel ready to talk."

11. Disengage if you cannot stay calm.

If the person is pushing your buttons or enticing you to feel angry, you should leave if possible. Becoming angry yourself will likely cause the situation to worsen, so leaving when you feel angry can prevent an escalation or fight.

12. Recognize abuse.

Anger and abuse are not the same things. Anger is a normal human emotion that needs to be dealt with. Abuse is an unhealthy and potentially dangerous way of interacting with another. The following are strategies that indicate abuse, not anger:

- Physical intimidation (whether or not it leads to actual violence),
- Making you feel guilty,
- Calling names or belittling,
- Sexual control or coercion.

13. Get to safety if the situation turns violent.

If you're dealing with a person who has anger management problems and you fear for your safety, leave right away and get to a safe place. Domestic abuse is an ongoing cycle, and if abuse happens once it's likely to happen again. It's very important for you to keep yourself and your family physically and emotionally safe. Here are the signs that the situation might be abusive:

- You feel afraid of making the person angry
- The person humiliates you, criticizes you or puts you down
- The person has a violent and unpredictable temper
- The person blames you for his or her abusive behavior
- The person threatens to hurt you

Getting Help

1. Know when to get medical help.

If you've tried adjusting calming your body and your mind, without seeing any change, you may want to get professional help. Getting medical treatment or therapies may help you alleviate stress or chronic worrying, which can make you worked up in the first place. You might want to seek medical help if you experience the following (which are symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder):

- Your job, social life, or relationships are disrupted by your worrying.
- Feeling like you can't control your worrying or calm down
- You can't relax or concentrate
- You avoid situations that might make you anxious
- You have difficulty sleeping Feeling tense all over

2. Try Self-Regulation Before Medication.

While therapy and self-help treatments are the primary ways to calm down, your mental health professional may put you on medication for the short term. These are usually anti-anxiety medications, which may help you calm down.

3. Learn about cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).

A mental health professional will probably want you to continue with self-help treatments, like calming your mind and body through relaxation techniques. But, you will probably start cognitive behavioral therapy. This will help you examine what makes you anxious, stressed, or worried. Once you've identified this behavior, you can come up with strategies to effectively calm down. With CBT, you'll learn: To understand helpful and unhelpful worry, which helps you accept and respond to stress. To monitor what sets you on edge, your triggers, and how long you stay worked up. This can help you track your progress. Deep breathing and progressive muscle relaxation tips. To change any negative ways of thinking or responses. This will help you mentally calm down. Face situations that usually make you anxious, worried, or panicked. This will make you feel as though you have more control.