

Coping Methods: Stress

Relaxational Breathing

1. Belly Breathing
 - a. Breathe in slowly and deeply through the nose while exhaling through the mouth; during inhalation the stomach should expand and while exhaling the stomach should contract.
2. 4 Count
 - a. Using only the nose, inhale for a count to four and exhale for a count of four
3. Diaphragmatic
 - a. Sit in a comfortable position and place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your ribcage; breathe in through your nose so only your stomach moves- the chest should remain still.

Meditation

1. Find a quiet place and sit in a comfortable position.
 - a. Important to sit with your back straight to help remain alert.
2. Focus on your natural breath pattern through your nose/nostrils.
 - a. You can close your eyes, keep them open, or anywhere between; just become more aware of your natural breathing and the sensations associated with inhalation and exhalation.
 - i. The purpose is to clear your mind of other distractions and focus on your breath pattern; don't be discouraged if your mind wanders- just nonjudgmentally bring your focus back to your breath.
 - ii. See how many breath cycles (one inhalation, one exhalation) you can follow.

Guided Imagery

- YouTube: Browse the options available there; you can pick a scene (beach, forest, etc.), time, and facilitator.
 1. Sit in a comfortable position (similar to how you would sit for Meditation).
 2. Use Diaphragmatic Breathing while closing your eyes, breathing in peace and breathing out stress.
 3. Once you are relaxed, go to your Happy Place, one that can help calm you when stress.
 4. While you are there, try to use all 5 senses.
 - a. What does it look like? Smell like? Feel like? What are you hearing? Any specific tastes?
 - b. Stay as long as you like – it's YOUR Happy Place!

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)

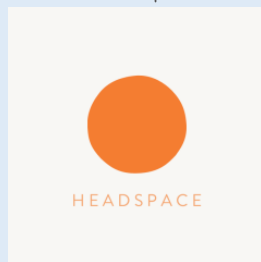
- YouTube: Browse the different exercises there on PMR
 1. Find a comfortable position (seated or lying down) and attempt to clear your mind.
 2. Tense and relax each of the following muscle groups for approximately 5 seconds:
 - a. Forehead → eyes and nose → lips, cheeks, and jaw → hands → forearms → upper arms → shoulders → back → stomach → hips and buttocks → thighs → feet → toes
 3. Once you finish, scan your body for any muscle groups that are still tense.
 - a. Tighten and relax these specific areas three or four times.

Got a smartphone? Below are a few apps that can help you with some of these techniques!

Buddhify²



Headspace



Calm



Whil



Insight Timer



Dealing with Depression

Start with a few small goals and slowly build from there. Draw upon whatever resources you have to take a short walk around the block or pick up the phone to call a loved one. Take things one day at a time and reward yourself for each accomplishment.

Self-help tip #1: Cultivate Supportive Relationships

Getting the support you need plays a big role in lifting the fog of depression and keeping it away. Isolation and loneliness can trigger or worsen depression, maintaining emotionally close relationships can be instrumental in overcoming it.

- Turn to friends and family member who make you feel loved and cared for.
- Try to keep up with social activities even if you don't feel like it.
- Join a support group for depression.
- Build new friendships: remember it's never too late to build and improve your support network.

Self-help tip #2: Get Moving

Studies show that exercise can be as effective as an anti-depressant. Work up to 30 minutes or more per day to boost your mood. The key is to pick an activity you enjoy so you're likely to stick with it.

- Put on some music and dance around
- Take your dog for a walk
- Use the stairs rather than an elevator
- Park your car in the farthest spot in the lot
- Pair up with an exercise partner.

Self-help tip #3: Challenge negative thinking

- Stop being so hard on yourself. Think about less harsh statements that offer more realistic descriptions.
- Allow yourself to be less than perfect.
- Socialize with positive people. Notice how people who look on the bright side deal with challenges. Try to adopt their optimism and persistence, even if you have to pretend for a little bit.
- Keep a "negative thought log." Review your log when you're in a good mood. Consider if the negativity was truly warranted.

Self-help tip #4: Do things that make you feel good. Do things that energize and relax you.

- Schedule fun activities into your day.
- Aim for eight hours of sleep every night.
- Expose yourself to a little sunlight every day.
- Practice relaxation techniques.
- Care for a pet.
- Develop a wellness toolbox.

Self-help tip #5: Eat a healthy, mood-boosting diet.

- Don't skip meals.
- Minimize sugar and refined carbs such as sugary snacks, baked goods, pasta, or French fries.
- Focus on complex carbohydrates such as baked potatoes, whole-wheat pasta, oatmeal, and whole grain breads.
- Boost your b-vitamins through citrus fruit, leafy greens, beans, chicken, eggs, or a b-complex vitamin supplement.
- Try super foods such as bananas, brown rice, and spinach.
- Consider taking a chromium supplement. Depression studies show that a chromium supplement may reduce carbohydrate cravings, ease mood swings, and boost energy.

When to get professional help

If you find your depression getting worse and worse, seek professional help. Depression can be treated and you can feel better! For UC Merced students, call CAPS at (209)228-4266 to make an appointment.

