

Soothing Techniques for COVID-19 and Beyond



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North Ottawa
Wellness Foundation

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Soothing Techniques for COVID-19 and Beyond



Five Deep Breaths

Take a deep breath. Pause. Exhale. Repeat.
Choose how to respond to the moment.

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Stress & Your Brain: Pause, Process, Proceed

Basic anatomy of your brain -Fight/flight response activated

Amygdala (alarm bell) pulses both a general warning throughout your brain and a special fast-track signal to your fight/flight neural and hormonal systems. “**Watch out!!**”

PFC (pre-frontal cortex) responsible for executive function - decision making, correcting errors & assessing situations – **Jiminy Cricket, emotional regulation**

Hippocampus (memory) imagine your personal filing cabinet

-from Buddha's Brain, Rick Hanson, PH. D.

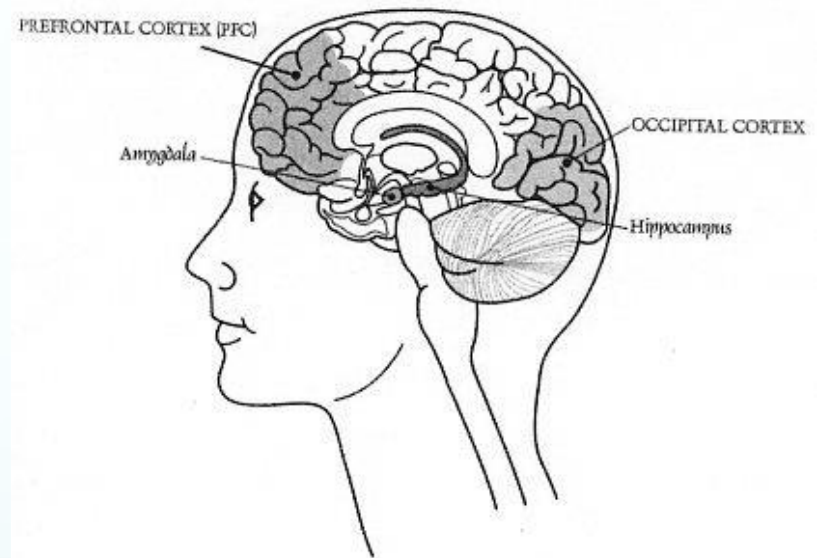


Figure 5
You See a Potential Threat or Opportunity

Am I seeing things **clearly**? Am I in my amygdala? Pre-frontal cortex?

Will I **react**? Or will I **respond**?

Five Deep Breaths

Take a deep breath. Pause. Exhale. Repeat.
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This easy practice, simply taking five deep, long breaths, pulls us out of the stress (fight or flight) response, and allows us to see with greater clarity both the content and the context of what is happening around us.

Five deep breaths, in through the nose, out through the nose (or mouth), activates the parasympathetic nervous system, the rest and digest vs. fight or flight response. Five deep, long breaths send a message to our physiology that we are not in imminent danger. We may be experiencing a very uncomfortable moment, but not a life-threatening situation. Five deep breaths allows the nervous system to stand down and navigate the stressful moment from our pre-frontal cortex, the more evolved part of our brain, vs. the amygdala, which is responsible for survival, keeping us alive at all costs.

To keep us alive, the amygdala is programmed to interpret the world around us, including the actions of others, as hostile, worthy of a fearful or angry reaction. Creating a regular practice of simply breathing – five deep breaths in the moment, and 5-10 minutes (or even 20 minutes) of calm breathing each day as you drive your car, make dinner, shower or get ready for bed – can create the important habit energy of activating our rest and digest, or relaxation, response. From this rest and digest response, we can better understand the context of each situation that presents itself to us, better digest – mentally and emotionally – what is really happening in this moment, and respond in a manner aligned with our kind heart, our compassion and goodness, rather than an overcharged amygdala response bent on assuming negativity, fear and anger in those around us.



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The Trunk of Your Tree

Pause. Breathe. Find the strength within yourself.
Slide your awareness down to your core, the “trunk
of your tree”, that quiet, still place within you.



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Parasympathetic Nervous System

- Conserves energy in your body, responsible for ongoing, steady-state activity
- Normal resting state of your body, brain and mind
- ✓ Cooling, steadying influence (*mirror neurons*)
- Produces feeling of relaxation, sense of contentment
- ✓ Quiets the mind and fosters tranquility, supports contemplative insight, personal reflection

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The Tray

Observe what is arising in this moment.
Cultivate curiosity. Proceed with a creative
response, true to you.

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Parasympathetic Nervous System

Operating from the pre-frontal cortex, with the parasympathetic nervous system fully engaged

- allows us to see things as they are (*on the tray*)
- frees us from the prison of
 - our own past experiences
 - emotional & social conditioning
 - pre-conceived notions, unintentional bias
 - LEDA – lazy brain

Am I reacting? Or responding to the moment?

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Notice what is arising – isn't this interesting?

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Quality Sleep

Establish a sleep schedule. Create a restful environment. Move your body everyday. Limit stress.



[Click here to learn more.](#)

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We know that getting a good night's sleep helps to keep our immunity strong. [The Mayo Clinic](#) shares these six tips (abridged) for a better night's sleep.

1. *Stick to a sleep schedule* – The recommended amount of sleep for a healthy adult is at least seven hours. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day. Being consistent reinforces your body's sleep-wake cycle.
2. *Pay attention to what you eat and drink* – Don't go to bed hungry or stuffed. In particular, avoid heavy or large meals within a couple of hours of bedtime. Your discomfort might keep you up. Nicotine, caffeine and alcohol deserve caution, too.
3. *Create a restful environment* – Create a room that's ideal for sleeping – cool, dark and quiet. Exposure to light might make it more challenging to fall asleep. Avoid prolonged use of light-emitting screens just before bedtime. Doing calming activities before bedtime, such as taking a bath or using relaxation techniques, might promote better sleep.
4. *Limit daytime naps* – Long daytime naps can interfere with nighttime sleep. If you choose to nap, limit yourself to up to 30 minutes and avoid doing so late in the day.
5. *Include physical activity in your daily routine* – Regular physical activity can promote better sleep. Avoid being active too close to bedtime, however. Spending time outside every day might be helpful, too.
6. *Manage worries* – Try to resolve your worries or concerns before bedtime. Jot down what's on your mind and then set it aside for tomorrow. Stress management might help. Meditation also can ease anxiety.

While you might not be able to control the factors that interfere with your sleep, you can [adopt habits](#) that encourage better sleep.



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Boost Your Immunity

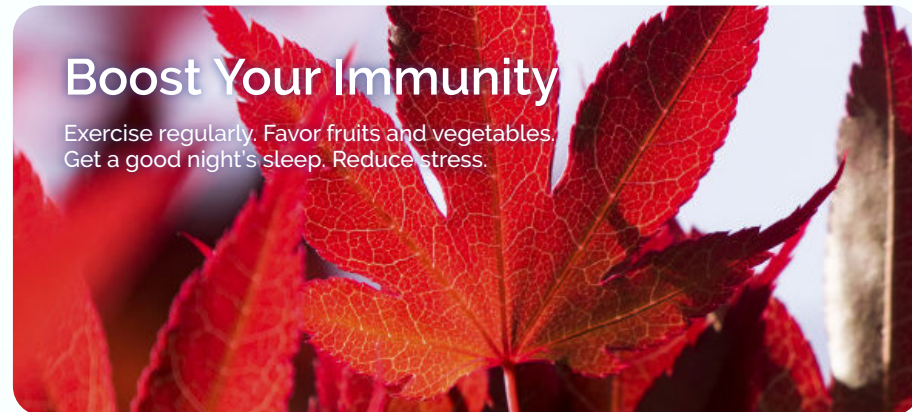
Exercise regularly.
Favor fruits and vegetables.
Get a good night's sleep.
Reduce stress.

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Favor fruits and vegetables ~ COVID-19 co-morbidities

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Harvard Medical School recommends the follow practices to strengthen your immune system.

Your first line of defense is to choose a healthy lifestyle..Every part of your body, including your immune system, functions better when protected from environmental assaults and bolstered by healthy-living strategies such as these:

- *Don't smoke.*
- *Eat a diet high in fruits and vegetables.*
- *Exercise regularly.*
- *Maintain a healthy weight.*
- *If you drink alcohol, drink only in moderation.*
- *Get adequate sleep.*
- *Take steps to avoid infection, such as washing your hands frequently and cooking meats thoroughly.*
- *Try to minimize stress.*

Get outside each day you can, drink in the sunshine, absorb some Vitamin D. Move your body, limit stress (please make "limit stress into a link to 5 Deep Breaths) and get a good night's sleep. Favor fruits and vegetables. As Harvard Medical school reminds us, "Like any fighting force, the immune system army marches on its stomach. Healthy immune system warriors need good, regular nourishment."

Source: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/how-to-boost-your-immune-system>



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Short term “survival”
v. long term well-being, vitality

How long do you want your
health span to be?

Personal Vitality: What is the
long-term cost of today’s stress
v. long term vitality?

Community Vitality: Who are
you & how do you want to show
up today in our community?

Are you feeling inspired to reel
in your stress response? ☺

-Elizabeth Blackburn, The Telomere Effect



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Parasympathetic Nervous System 😊

- Activating the Parasympathetic Nervous System
- Deep breathing –let's try it now
 - Notice the sensations, follow the breath as it moves through the body
 - Feel the physical sensations, notice the effect in the body, in the mind

As is the breath, so too is the mind

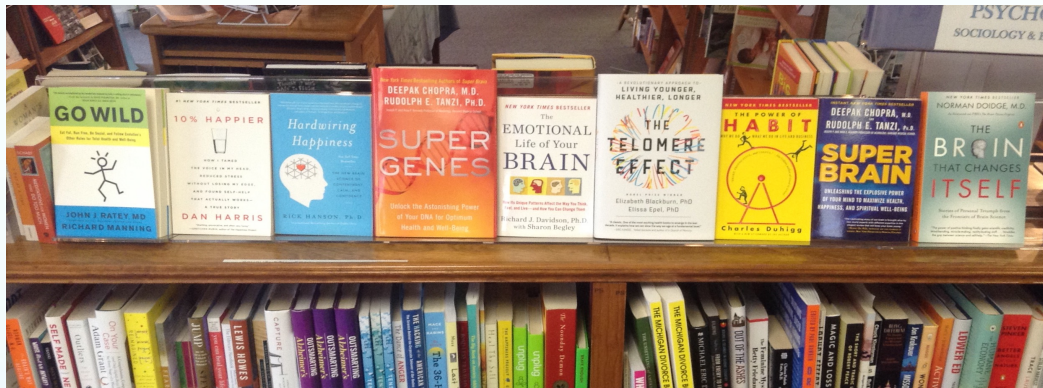
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Advantages of Techniques in Action

- Self Awareness, Self-Regulation – being informed by the wisdom of our emotions without being propelled into unskillful actions that cause disharmony and create more stress
- Ripple Effect - at work? at home?
 - Are you leaving sunshine? Or shadow?
- Personal Vitality, Community vitality

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Well-being books and social justice books available locally at
The Bookman Bookstore *(critical topic, limited supply)*



Or online via the Bookman's link to wellness books

<https://bookmanbookstore.indielite.org/health-and-wellness-partnership-local-thought-leaders>

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More information?

- Resources at www.NorthOttawaWellnessFoundation.org
- Chamber e-blasts
- *In the Moment* community book
 - Available at The Bookman Bookstore



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