

HOW BREATHING REDUCES ANXIETY

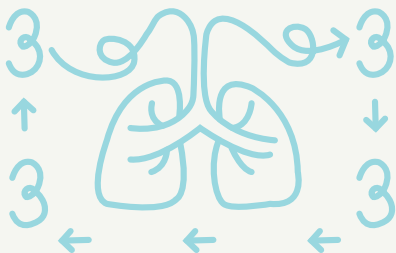
by Lisa Damour, PhD

When we're anxious, the brain's primitive "fight or flight" system

- sends the heart and lungs into overdrive
- to deliver heavily oxygenated blood to our large muscles
- in case we need to attack or run

If anxiety becomes too intense, controlled breathing can help because

- nerves on the surface of the lungs communicate with the brain
- breathing deeply and slowly tells these nerves that all is well
- the nerves send this reassuring message to the brain
- which quiets the anxiety alarm



Try square breathing

- inhale slowly for a count of three
- hold your breath for a count of three
- exhale slowly for a count of three
- wait for a count of three, then begin the cycle again

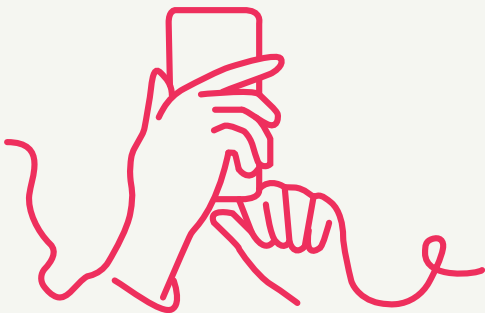
If you feel anxious often or your anxiety becomes very intense very quickly, use calm moments to practice square breathing. A little practice will make it easier to slip into square breathing when your anxiety starts to ramp up.

TEENS AND RISKY BEHAVIOR

by Lisa Damour, PhD

Use these key phrases to help your teen stay safe:

- “Don’t focus on whether you could get caught – you probably won’t. Focus on whether you could get hurt.”
- “If your friends want to do something that makes you uncomfortable, feel free to blame your good behavior on me.”
- “Call me if things get out of hand. I will never make you sorry that you asked for my help.”
- “Just because something’s legal, doesn’t mean it’s safe – take cigarettes and tanning beds, for example. You can be on the right side of the law and the wrong side of the science.”
- “You want freedom and I want to give it to you. The more evidence I have of your good judgment, the more freedom you can have.”
- “Nothing matters more to me than your safety. I don’t hate fun. I love you.”



HOW TO MANAGE A MELTDOWN

by Lisa Damour, PhD

Pause between each step to see if it's done the trick. If not, move forward to the next step.

1) Listen without interrupting

2) Offer sincere empathy

"That stinks!" or "I'm so sorry that happened."

3) Validate distress

"You have every right to be mad/sad/upset." or "A good cry is the right thing right now."

4) Support coping

"Is there anything I can do that won't make this worse?" or "Would some tea help?"

5) Express non-dismissive confidence

"This is tough, and so are you." or "As hard as this feels right now, I do think that you'll get through it."

6) Offer to help problem-solve

"Do you want my help trying to tackle this?" or "Any ideas about what might work to make this better?"

7) Divide the problem into two buckets

Things that can be changed and things that can't.

8) For the things that can be changed, brainstorm possible solutions

9) For what cannot be changed, support acceptance

"There's always some stuff we just have to live with." or "Let's focus your energy where it can make a difference."

HOW TO DO HOMEWORK

by Lisa Damour, PhD

- 1) Start as early in the day as you can**
- 2) Use due dates to decide what to tackle first**
- 3) Divide your work into two categories**
 - work you find fascinating
 - work that requires effortful attention
- 4) Decide to do the fascinating work**
 - first, to help you get started, or
 - last, as a reward for doing your other work, or
 - mixed in with your other work to help you maintain momentum
- 5) For work that requires effortful attention, choose a motivation strategy**
 - work with a quiet parent or study buddy (in person or online)
 - take 5-minute breaks between 25-minute periods of uninterrupted focus
 - use your breaks to snack, move, play, or do anything else that keeps you going
 - all of the above
- 6) When you're stuck**
 - describe the problem out loud to yourself or someone else, or
 - make note of where you're stuck and turn to other work
 - return to where you got stuck (you'll almost always be unstuck)
 - if you're still stuck, ask for help



$$2x + 3y =$$

HOW TO COPE WITH STRESS

by Lisa Damour, PhD

Under stress, we instinctively seek ways to cope. But not all coping is created equal. Unhealthy coping strategies may provide short-term emotional relief but lead to problems down the line. Healthy coping techniques, on the other hand, offer immediate relief and can be sustained over time.



UNHEALTHY COPING	HEALTHY COPING
<p>WITHDRAWAL and/or IRRITABILITY Avoiding others or pushing them away provides quick emotional relief but harms important relationships.</p>	<p>SOCIAL CONNECTION Positive interpersonal relationships reduce anxiety, improve mood, and boost immune functioning.</p>
<p>SUBSTANCE MISUSE Using drugs or alcohol can blunt emotional distress, but doing so quickly becomes destructive.</p>	<p>ENGAGING DISTRACTIONS Periodic mental vacations - such as getting lost in a book, doing absorbing work, or spending time in nature - offer essential breaks from stress.</p>
<p>JUNK HABITS Excessive couch-surfing, comfort food consumption, or late night scrolling trades short-term relief for long-term problems.</p>	<p>CONCIENTIOUS SELF-CARE Prioritizing sleep, physical activity, and eating well allow us to sustain ourselves when stressed.</p>

WHEN A TEEN'S FRIEND IS IN CRISIS

by Lisa Damour, PhD

We never want teenagers to regret seeking help for a friend in crisis. To respond effectively while respecting teens' loyalty to their peers, follow the steps below.

1) Offer reassurance: "You were right to let me know. This is what good friends do."

2) Empathize: "This is heavy. How long have you been carrying it? Are you okay?"

3) Move forward together. Barring an immediate safety concern, make a plan for alerting the friend's parents or caregivers:

- "Do you want to tell them, or should I?"
- "Do you want to give your friend the option of telling her folks herself, then having them let us know that she did?"
- "Is there an anonymous way to do this?"

If the friend's parents ignore the problem, or are the problem, suggest the same options for involving a school counselor or administrator.

Remind your teenager that adults need to know if a friend engages in any of the following:

- Self-harm
- Very risky behavior
- Eating disordered behavior
- Depression or suicidality
- Dangerous relationships

