

DE-STRESS QUICKLY

“The greatest weapon against stress is our ability to choose one thought over another.”

~William James

BY SARAH MYERS ESQ., LMFT, LAC

The stress response activates physiological processes, including changes in the brain, which make it difficult to perceive things clearly or make good decisions. When you feel stressed, overwhelmed, panicked, or upset, try these simple and fast-acting steps:

1. Take a deep breath – inhale for a count of 4, hold for a count of 4, and exhale for a count of 4.
2. Do a body scan and/or move your body around – feel your feet on the floor and your body in the chair (if you are sitting down), stretch your legs/torso/arms, gently roll your neck from side to side.
3. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other on your abdomen and breathe – this activates neurotransmitters that are calming to be released into your body.
4. Notice your surroundings – make note of your surroundings with your senses (what do you see/feel/taste/smell/hear?).
5. Close your eyes and take a deep breath – feeling the air enter and leave your body signals to the body that you are safe. As you breathe, imagine breathing into your feet, your knees, hips, stomach, heart, throat, and forehead sequentially. This will activate different parts of your brain and pause the “fight or flight” response.
6. Open your eyes and smile – smiling releases endorphins that help neutralize the stress response.
7. Say to yourself, “I have the resources to deal with this” – uncertainty triggers the stress response, so by simply acknowledging that a solution or the resources to cope are available, the response will be neutralized.
8. Once you are calmer, make a list of resources or steps you can take to deal with the stressor.

Photo by Kelly Sikkema on Unsplash

Sarah Myers, Esq., LMFT, LAC, is the Executive Director of the Colorado Lawyer Assistance Program (COLAP). COLAP is the free, confidential and independent well-being program for the legal community of Colorado. For more information, go to www.coloradolap.org. For a confidential consultation, discussion about your stressors, or to obtain helpful resources, contact COLAP at 303-986-3345 or info@coloradolap.org.