

Looking after your mental health while social distancing



1800 111 888

yourmentalhealth.ie
Information Line
1800 111 888



Infectious disease outbreaks like coronavirus (COVID-19), can be worrying. This can affect your mental health. But there are many things you can do to mind your mental health during times like this.

How your mental health might be affected

The spread of coronavirus is a new and challenging event. Some people might find it more worrying than others. Try to remember that medical, scientific and public health experts are working hard to contain the virus.

Most people's lives will change in some way over a period of days, weeks or months. But in time, it will pass.

You may notice some of the following:

- increased anxiety
- feeling stressed
- finding yourself excessively checking for symptoms, in yourself, or others
- becoming irritable more easily
- feeling insecure or unsettled
- fearing that normal aches and pains might be the virus
- having trouble sleeping
- feeling helpless or a lack of control
- having irrational thoughts

If you are taking any prescription medications, make sure you have enough.

How to mind your mental health during this time

Keeping a realistic perspective of the situation based on facts is important. Here are some ways you can do this.

Stay informed but set limits for news and social media

The constant stream of social media updates and news reports about coronavirus could cause you to feel worried. Sometimes it can be difficult to separate facts from rumours. Use trustworthy and reliable sources to get your news.

Read up to date on corona virus on <https://www2.hse.ie/coronavirus/>

On social media, people may talk about their own worries or beliefs. You don't need to make them your own. Too much time on social media may increase your worry and levels of anxiety. Consider limiting how much time you spend on social media.

If you find the coverage on coronavirus is too intense for you, talk it through with someone close or get support.

Keep up your healthy routines

Your routine may be affected by the coronavirus outbreak in different ways. But during difficult times like this, it's best if you can keep some structure in your day.

It's important to pay attention to your needs and feelings, especially during times of stress. You may still be able to do some of the things you enjoy and find relaxing.

In this pack you'll find some ideas for maintaining a routine, keeping active and using strategies to look after your health and wellbeing.

Do you need to talk to someone right now?

Free call Samaritans [116 123](tel:116123) or

Text 086 1800 280 (text messaging service)

THE MENTAL HEALTH ALL-STARS

ALLIES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE VOID





Staying well when social distancing

We've created some top tips to support those who are undertaking social distancing to get through the next few weeks.



- 1 Establish a daily routine.** Routines provide structure and purpose.
- 2 Balance your weekly routine** so you have a good mix of work (activities that have to be done), rest and leisure.
- 3 Think about which regular activities that are most important to you.** What are the important elements to these? Can you adapt them to carry out in the home? For example, instead of a class, following an online strength and balance routine.
- 4 Set daily goals** to provide purpose and a sense of achievement. This might include working through that list of the things you keep meaning to do but never get round to?
- 5 Identify the triggers that make you feel low** and look for ways to reduce or manage them.
- 6 Talk with family, friends and neighbours** to help them understand how you feel and how they can help. Can they talk you through using apps on your mobile phone, for instance?
- 7 Take care of yourself.** Eat and drink healthily with plenty of fruit, vegetables and water to support your immune function and energy levels. For more information see the [BDA website](#).
- 8 Avoid staying still for too long.** Exercise and regular movement will maintain fitness and strength. If you are working from home, take breaks and eat away from your "desk."
- 9 Have a good sleep routine.** If you are struggling, try avoiding tea and coffee in the late afternoon and evening, take a bath, using blackout curtains, listening to gentle music or deep breathing exercises.
- 10 Keep in touch.** Arrange to speak to someone most days on the phone, through social media or over the garden fence. [Age UK](#) and [Silverline](#) have people to speak to.



Keeping active

When your activity level decreases, you may become even less motivated and more lethargic. When you stop doing the things you used to enjoy, you miss out on good experiences. This can make you feel even worse, building a vicious cycle.

If you are feeling low, it can be difficult to find the motivation and energy to do things that could lift your mood. You may find that you give up activities that you previously enjoyed. Over time, you might end up doing very little. This can lead you to feel even lower. You might also neglect your daily tasks and responsibilities, and start to feel bad about yourself or overwhelmed by all the things you have to do.

One way to feel better is to be more active, especially in enjoyable activities and in tackling your list of tasks and responsibilities, in a realistic and achievable way, so that you set yourself up to succeed. It's good to start gradually and build up what you are doing over time, as you would if you were training for a sports event.

Keeping active has many benefits:

- It helps you to feel better. It gives your mind something else to think about and can help give you a sense of purpose, that you are moving forward and taking control of your life again. You may even get some enjoyment from the activities you do.
- It helps you to feel less tired. Usually, when you are tired, you need rest. However, when you are feeling low, the opposite is true. Sleeping more and doing less will only make you feel more lethargic and tired. It also leaves room for your mind to go over negative things, which will make you feel even worse.
- It can help you think more clearly. Once you get started, you may find that you take a different perspective on problems.

However, it may not be easy to get started. You might think negative thoughts such as "I won't enjoy doing this," or "It's too hard," or "I'll probably fail at this too", or you might try to do too much too soon. Things that you usually don't even have to think about doing can seem daunting.

Pace yourself realistically, taking into account both your physical limitations and how you are feeling. You might need to take things more slowly than you have done in the past, to take more breaks, or to switch between one task and another, so that you do not spend too long doing one thing. Think creatively about how you might do something in a more manageable way. Think about what might get in the way of you doing it, and plan ways round these barriers.

The weekly plan - *(Please see final sheet)*

You can use the last page of this leaflet to plan your week in advance. You may be able to do more of the things you want to, in addition to the things that you have to do. This can really help to lift your mood.

Start by filling in everything you have to do, such as picking up children from school and attending appointments. Then you can begin to plan other activities that you would like to do. Remember to pace yourself. You may find it helpful to plan in some time for:

- Things which are important to you and will give you a sense of achievement. Break big tasks down into smaller chunks. For example, if you want to sort out a pile of paperwork, you might make a start by spending twenty minutes on it each day. Often, it is easier to aim to do a task for a set period of time rather than trying to achieve a set amount.
- Things which you might enjoy. This might include things you have enjoyed in the past and new things you would like to try.
- Time spent with people whose company you like.
- Exercise. This can improve your mood and general health. It doesn't need to be anything too energetic. Walking or gentle yoga can be good options.
- Time for yourself - make time to relax and give yourself space between activities.
- Try to plan consistent bedtimes. Having a regular sleeping pattern can help improve your mood and energy levels.

Now, all you have to do is try to follow your plan each day. Give yourself credit for what you do, even if it seems quite small. Don't worry if unexpected things come up and you cannot stick to it exactly. On the other hand, don't let not feeling like doing anything stop you from doing what you had planned.

Email: pals@kch.nhs.uk

**Written by Dr Jane Hutton, Consultant Clinical Psychologist,
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July 2012**



KING'S HEALTH PARTNERS

Weekly Plan							
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
08.00 - 10.00							
10.00 - 12.00							
12.00 - 14.00							
14.00 - 16.00							
16.00 - 18.00							
18.00 - 20.00							
20.00 - 22.00							

WEEKLY ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

Week Beginning: _____

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
8 to 9 am							
9 to 10							
10 to 11							
11 to 12 pm							
12 to 1							
1 to 2							
2 to 3							
3 to 4							
4 to 5							
5 to 6							
6 to 7							
7 to 8							
8 to 10							
10 to 12 am							

Self-care checklist

- Drink a glass of water
- Stretch
- Take a shower
- Listen to a relaxation exercise
- If possible go for a walk
- Listen to your favourite music

What am I worried about?

Who can I talk to about my worries?

What am I feeling positive about today?



Wellness Tools

Our wellness tools are day to day things that we can do that make us feel good. When we are having a bad day- remembering our wellness tools and picking one to focus on can help lift our mood.

These are specific to you

A few examples may include:

- Going for a walk on my own or with a friend
- A relaxation exercise
- Listening to my favourite music
- Watching favourite movie/T.V show

Now write down what makes you feel good....

New wellness tools you would like to try?

Activity Idea: You can gather pictures or images that show your wellness activities- these could be placed in a small box or shoe box so that when you're having a difficult day you can go to this box and find a wellness tool that can help lift your mood or make you feel good

Daily Hygiene Chart

For Teens



<http://www.chartjungle.com>

What To Do	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
Morning							
Bath/Shower or Wash Face							
Shave if needed							
Put on Deodorant							
Put on Clean Clothes							
Brush Hair							
Eat Breakfast							
Brush Teeth							
Make Bed							
Evening							
Bath/Shower or Wash Face							
Put on Pajamas							
Brush Teeth							
Sometime each day							
Exercise							
Sometime each week							
Cut Nails							



Sleep Hygiene

- **Sleep hygiene** includes having a relatively unvarying sleep schedule, an effective pre-sleep routine for falling asleep, an adequate amount of sleep, and living habits throughout the day that do not negatively impact sleep.
- What do we think is the recommended amount of hours of sleep we should be getting as adults?

In and around 7-9 hours sleep is recommended for adults and older adults. This does vary from person to person and medications can impact our sleeping too.

- Disruptions in sleep can impact your attention, concentration, memory, emotions and engagement in activities throughout the day.

Pre-sleep rituals;

- are the routine activities that we do before sleep to help us get to sleep.
- What are the things we do to help us get to sleep?
- The foods and drink that we take in during the day and the level of physical exercise or movement we do can impact our ability to fall asleep at night. Reducing caffeine intake after 6 E.g. soothing activities like warm showers, face mask, skincare, shaving, reading a book, mindfulness, yoga, meditation.

Before Sleep



What helps me to wind down?;

-
-
-
-
-

Sleep Hygiene

Environment;

- What do we do to the physical room/bed to help us to sleep?
- The bed and bedroom should be preserved for sleep & sex. Sometimes we might get into the habit of bringing the laptop into the bed to do work, or bringing food into bed. This confuses the body.
- Our eyes take in the light in our bedrooms, and when we bring food or work to bed, we connect sleep/rest with these activities.
- Light triggers the brain to believe that it is daytime and this makes it harder for us to sleep. We first have to reduce our light intake by switching off phone/ televisions/ laptop screens, dimming the lights (ideally pitch black, but each individual is different), closing the blinds/curtains.
- Environmental adaptation: a comfortable mattress, number of pillows that you feel comfortable taking to bed, comfortable bed covers (e.g. the linen), reduced light intake, switching off phone, dimming the lights, closing the blinds/curtains.
- Bed partners (a spouse, pet etc.) may also disrupt sleep through snoring or going to bed at a different time to us. This is when you may have to set a boundaries with your bed partner (come to bed a half hour after I go to bed so I have the chance to get into deeper sleep). You may have to adapt to having a bed partner by using simple equipment like earplugs and facemasks.



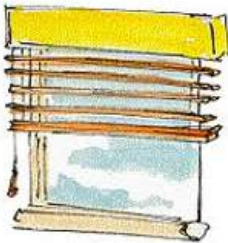
Sleep Hygiene

Post sleep rituals;

- These re the routine activities that we do after we sleep to help us to wake up/get out of bed.
- What things do we do to help ourselves wake up?
- Alarm clock, checking our phones, opening the curtains, going for a shower, having some coffee or tea (caffeine to alert the body), having breakfast (cereal, fruit, juice), exercise or doing your makeup/hair.



Waking up



What helps me to wake up?;

-
-
-
-
-



COVID-19: Psychological Wellbeing

Coping with Distress

*Prepared by Daniel Flynn, Principal Psychology Manager, Cork Kerry Mental Health Services,
Head of Psychology Services Ireland (HPSI)
17.03.2020*



COVID-19 is bringing unrivalled challenges for us as individuals, as HSE employees and as part of a wider Irish society. It is important that we all as individuals do what we can to look after ourselves and also each other as we try to effectively manage this evolving situation.

The following tips might be helpful to provide you and your colleagues with steps that might assist you in responding as effectively as you can with stress or distress associated with some of the practical and emotional challenges we are now facing.

Managing Stress using Distress Tolerance skills

Distress Tolerance skills are for surviving crises when the crisis cannot be changed right away. The aim is to learn to survive crises, without resorting to any actions which are going to make things worse. Although we cannot change the fact that COVID-19 has had a huge impact on us personally and in society, we can manage our psychological responses.

When to use Distress Tolerance skills?

- You want to act on your emotions but it will only make things worse
- Emotion mind threatens to overwhelm you and you need to stay skillful
- You are overwhelmed yet demands must be met
- Arousal is extreme but problems can't be solved immediately

The follow are some key skills that may be useful if you find that you or a colleague are feeling under emotional stress or pressure.

COVID-19: Psychological Wellbeing

1. Stop Skills

We use this skill when our emotions are starting to overwhelm us



Stop

Stop! Freeze! Do not just react. Do not move a muscle! Your emotions may try to make you act without thinking. Stay in control!

Take a step back

Take a step back from the situation. Take a break. Let go. Take a deep breath. Do not let your feelings make you act impulsively.

Observe

Notice what is going on inside and outside of you. What is the situation? What are your thoughts and feelings? What are others saying or doing?

Proceed mindfully

Act with awareness. In deciding what to do, consider your thoughts and feelings, the situation, and other people's thoughts and feelings. Think about your goals. Ask yourself what actions will make it better or worse?

Adapted from DBT Skills Training Manual (2nd edition), Marsha Linehan 2015

2. Self-Soothing Skills

- Self-soothing refers to comforting, nurturing and being gentle and kind to oneself.
- This skill is essential to help you to cope more effectively when you are having a bad day or dealing with a lot of stress. Self-soothing provides both comfort and reassurance. It can help you stay grounded in your body and in the present moment and can act as a means of distraction from the difficulties you are dealing with. The goal here is not to fix the problem, but to take some time away from it so that the negative emotional volume goes down

A way to remember these skills is to think of soothing using each of your five senses:

Vision:

- Soothe with what we see: Look at old photos or pictures that make you feel happy or that you associate with positive times in your life. Try to remember how you thought and felt at this time. See it as the antidote to current emotions. Can you focus on just noticing what you can see and attend to the thoughts and emotions you associate with this?

Hearing:

- Soothe with sounds: This can be in the form of music or sounds from nature. What sounds change your mood? What makes you feel better or creates a sense of calm? Can you access this music or sound via a personal device or online? Can you focus on just noticing this sound and attend to the thoughts and emotions you associate with this?

Smell:

- Soothe with smells: What aroma or fragrance do you like. What makes you feel calm or brings back positive memories, a feeling of comfort or safety. Maybe it is the smell of freshly brewed coffee, herbal tea, home baking or even chocolate! Can you choose to focus on just noticing this smell and attend to the thoughts and emotions you associate with this.

Taste:

- Soothe with you sense of taste: Can you really notice what something tastes like. Can you choose something that you like and really savour the taste. So often we mindlessly eat our food and miss or don't give ourselves time to fully appreciate the taste or how it makes us feel. Can you choose to focus on just noticing the taste of something and attend to the thoughts and emotions you associate with this.

Touch:

- Soothe with your sense of touch: Really notice what something feels like. Is something hard or soft, cold or warm. Maybe choose something that you like the feel of or that you associate with comfort. It could be a blanket, a favourite piece of clothing or maybe even something like a stress ball that you can squeeze!

Adapted from DBT Skills Training Manual (2nd edition), Marsha Linehan 2015

COVID-19: Psychological Wellbeing

3. Distraction Skills

- When our emotions run high, in the short term, we can use distraction as a way of turning down the volume on these emotions. Our wise mind will tell us that dwelling on negative thoughts will fuel emotions. A useful way to remember how to distract ourselves is to remember that wise minds ACCEPTS something needs to change. Check off what might help you.

Activities:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus attention on a task you need to get done | <input type="checkbox"/> Listen to music |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rent movies; watch TV | <input type="checkbox"/> Build something |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean a room in your house | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time with your children |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play computer games | <input type="checkbox"/> Play cards |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go walking. Exercise | <input type="checkbox"/> Read magazines, books, comics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surf the internet, email | <input type="checkbox"/> Do crossword puzzles or Sudoku |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Call a friend |

Contributing:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Call or send an instant message encouraging someone or just saying hi. | <input type="checkbox"/> Give away things you <u>don't</u> need. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Help a friend or family member. | <input type="checkbox"/> Make something nice for someone else. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surprise someone with something nice, a card, <u>a favour</u> . | <input type="checkbox"/> Do something thoughtful. |

Comparisons:

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Compare how you are feeling now to a time when you felt different. | <input type="checkbox"/> Compare yourself to those less fortunate. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Think about people coping the same as you or less well than you. | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch reality shows about others' troubles; read about disasters, others' suffering. |

Emotions:

Be sure the event creates different emotions- when sad look at things that make you feel happy

- ☐ Read emotional books or stories, old letters.
- ☐ Watch emotional TV shows or movies.
- ☐ Listen to emotional music.

Pushing away:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Push the thought away by leaving it for a while. | <input type="checkbox"/> Block thoughts and images from your mind. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Leave the situation mentally. | <input type="checkbox"/> Notice ruminating: Yell NO! |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Build an imaginary wall between yourself and the situation. | <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to think about the painful situations. |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Put the pain on a shelf. Box it up and put it away for a while. |

Thoughts:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Count to 10; count colors in a painting or poster or out the window, anything. | <input type="checkbox"/> Work puzzles. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Repeat words to a song in your mind. | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch TV or read. |

Sensations:

- ☐ Squeeze a rubber ball very hard
- ☐ Listen to very loud music.
- ☐ Hold ice in your hand or mouth.
- ☐ Go out in the rain.
- ☐ Take a hot or cold shower.
- ☐ Taste a hot

4. Radical Acceptance Skills

There are times when things are not as we want them to be. But despite us wishing things to be different in the moment it doesn't change the reality of the situation. Telling ourselves "I don't like this" and "it should be different" also does not change the situation.

Why do we need to accept reality?

- Rejecting reality does not change reality.
- Changing reality requires first accepting reality.
- Stress and emotional pain cannot be avoided; it is nature's way of signalling that something is wrong.
- Rejecting reality turns short-term emotional pain into longer term suffering.
- Refusing to accept reality can keep you stuck in unhappiness, bitterness, anger, sadness, shame or other painful emotions.
- Acceptance may lead to sadness but deep calmness usually follows.

What we need to accept:

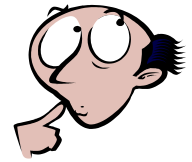
- Everything has a cause (including events and situations that cause you emotional pain and suffering).
- Life is worth living despite painful events in it.
- It is what it is for now, but this won't last forever.

Remember:

Pain (emotional or physical) + Non acceptance = Suffering

Adapted from DBT Skills Training Manual (2nd edition), Marsha Linehan 2015

what is mindfulness?



Have you ever noticed that when you are doing quite familiar and repetitive tasks, like driving your car, or vacuuming, that you mind is often miles away thinking about something else? You may be fantasising about going on a vacation, worrying about some upcoming event, or thinking about any number of other things.

In either case you are not focusing on your current experience, and you are not really in touch with the 'here and now.' This way of operating is often referred to as **automatic pilot** mode.

Mindfulness is the opposite of automatic pilot mode. It is about experiencing the world that is firmly in the 'here and now.' This mode is referred to as the **being** mode. It offers a way of freeing oneself from automatic and unhelpful ways of thinking and responding.

Benefits of Mindfulness

By learning to be in mindful mode more often, it is possible to develop a new habit that helps to weaken old, unhelpful and automatic thinking habits. For people with emotional problems, these old habits can involve being overly pre-occupied with thinking about the future, the past, themselves, or their emotions in a negative way. Mindfulness training in this case does not aim to immediately control, remove, or fix this unpleasant experience. Rather, it aims to develop a skill to place you in a better position to break free of or not 'buy into' these unhelpful habits that are causing distress and preventing positive action.

Core Features of Mindfulness

Observing

The first major element of mindfulness involves observing your experience in a manner that is more direct and sensual (**sensing mode**), rather than being analytical (**thinking mode**). A natural tendency of the mind is to try and think about something rather than directly experience it. Mindfulness thus aims to shift one's focus of attention away from thinking to simply observing thoughts, feelings, and bodily sensations (e.g., touch, sight, sound, smell, taste) with a kind and gentle curiosity.

Describing

This aspect of mindfulness relates to noticing the very fine details of what you are observing. For example, if you are observing something like a tangerine, the aim is to describe what it looks like, what is its shape, colour, and texture. You might place a descriptive name to it, like "orange", "smooth", or "round". The same process also can be applied to emotions (e.g. "heavy", "tense").

Participating Fully

An aim of mindfulness is to allow yourself to consider the whole of your experience, without excluding anything. Try to notice all aspects of whatever task or activity you are doing, and do it with your full care and attention.

Being Non-Judgemental

It is important to adopt an accepting stance towards your experience. A significant reason for prolonged emotional distress relates to attempts to avoid or control your experience. When being more mindful, no attempt is made to evaluate experiences or to say that they are good, bad, right, or wrong, and no attempt is made to immediately control or avoid the experience. Accepting all of one's experience is one of the most challenging aspects of mindfulness, and takes time and practice to develop. Bringing a kind and gentle curiosity to one's experience is one way of adopting a non-judgmental stance.



Focusing on One Thing at a Time

When observing your own experience, a certain level of effort is required to focus your attention on only one thing at a time, from moment to moment. It is natural for distracting thoughts to emerge while observing, and there is a tendency to follow and 'chase' these thoughts with more thinking. The art of 'being present' is to develop the skill of noticing when you have drifted away from the observing and sensing mode, into thinking mode. When this happens it is not a mistake, but just acknowledge it has happened, and then gently return to observing your experience.

How to Become Mindful

Mindfulness is a skill that takes time to develop. It is not easy, and like any skill it requires a certain level of effort, time, patience, and ongoing practice.

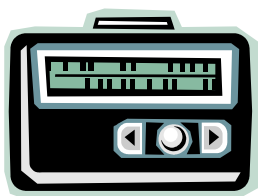
Mindfulness can be taught in a number of ways. Meditation is one of the key techniques used in mindfulness training, but not the only technique. Contact your mental health professional for further information on mindfulness training and whether it may be suited to your needs.



mindfulness and letting go

Trying to control or avoid worries or other negative thinking by answering back, chasing, or suppressing these negative thoughts can sometimes *strengthen* this negative experience rather than diminish it. Mindfulness is one way of skilfully disengaging from or letting go of negative thinking.

This approach involves practicing how to notice when you are automatically drifting into negative thinking and then skilfully redirecting your attention back to the present, to the here and now



It may be helpful to think of this approach in terms of a radio. That is, imagine that the negative thoughts that drift into your mind as coming from a loud

radio that is tuned to a station where the thoughts are very negative and seem to be shouting at you.

The skill in mindfulness is not so much about trying to turn the radio off, but changing the way you listen to the radio. In this way the volume of the radio station can be reduced, and therefore seem less disruptive and distressing.

However, the important thing to remember is this is not a quick fix, it is not easy, and requires regular practice. The thoughts may still shout at you, but you are changing the way you listen. Begin with the formal practice described in this information sheet. Just like any skill, such as learning a musical instrument, you need to practice, practice, practice! By practicing daily you may eventually become better at letting go, and be able to do things in a more informal way.



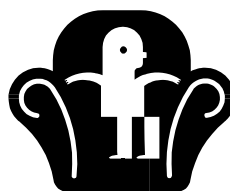
Steps for Letting Go

To begin, it may be best to start by practicing with minor concerns before moving onto major worries or negative thoughts.



1) To begin the practice, sit down in a chair and adopt a relaxed and alert posture, then ask yourself, **what am I experiencing right now?** What thoughts are around, what feelings are around, and what body sensations?

Allow yourself to just acknowledge, observe and describe these experiences to yourself, without trying to change them or answer the thoughts back. Spend 30 seconds to 1 minute just doing this.



2) Now bringing **your focus of awareness to your breath**, focusing on the sensations of your breath as it moves back and forth in your belly. Binding your awareness to the back and forth movements of the sensations in your belly from moment to moment, and letting all thoughts go. Maybe say to yourself 'relax' or 'let go' on each outward breath. Spend about 30 seconds to 1 minute doing this.

3) Now **expanding your awareness to sensing your whole body breathing**, being aware of sensations throughout your body. If there are any strong feelings around, maybe saying to yourself "whatever it is, it is OK, just let me feel it." Allowing yourself to breathe with these feelings, and if your mind wanders to bothersome thoughts just acknowledge and let go of these - focussing back on sensing your breath. Continue doing this for about 1 minute.

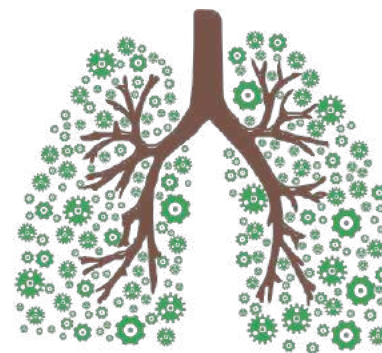
TIP: You can try increasing the time of steps 2 & 3 as you start to get more familiar with this skill.

How Breathing Affects Feelings

The way we breathe is strongly linked to the way we feel. When we are relaxed we breathe slowly, and when we are anxious we breathe more quickly.

Normal breathing

When we breathe we take in oxygen (O_2) that is used by the body. This process creates carbon dioxide (CO_2), a waste product that we breathe out. When our breathing is relaxed the levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide are balanced - this allows our body to function efficiently.



Exercise breathing

When we exercise our body uses more oxygen to fuel our muscles, and therefore produces more carbon dioxide. Since our breathing rate increases during exercise, we breathe in extra oxygen and breathe out the extra carbon dioxide. This means that the balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide levels is maintained.



Anxious breathing

When we are anxious our breathing rate increases: we take in more oxygen and breathe out more carbon dioxide than usual. Because we are not exercising our body is not using up the extra oxygen, and so it is not producing any extra carbon dioxide. Because carbon dioxide is being expelled faster than it is being produced the levels of carbon dioxide in the blood go down (leading to a temporary change in the pH of the blood called respiratory alkalosis). This can lead us to feeling unpleasantly light-headed, tingly in our fingers and toes, clammy, and sweaty.



When our breathing returns to its usual rate the levels of carbon dioxide return to normal, and the symptoms resolve. You can deliberately relax your breathing to feel better.

Relaxed breathing instructions

- 1) Sit or lie down comfortably. Close your eyes if you would like to
- 2) Breathe *slowly* and *steadily* in through your nose for a count of 4
- 3) Hold your breath for a count of 2
- 4) Breathe out *slowly* and *steadily* for a count of 4
- 5) Repeat for a few minutes

progressive muscle relaxation

One of the body's reactions to fear and anxiety is muscle tension. This can result in feeling "tense", or can lead to muscle aches and pains, as well as leaving some people feeling exhausted. Think about how you respond to anxiety. Do you "tense up" when you're feeling anxious? Muscle relaxation can be particularly helpful in cases where anxiety is especially associated to muscle tension. This information sheet will guide you through a common form of relaxation designed to reduce muscle tension.

Muscle tension

Muscle tension is commonly associated with stress, anxiety and fear as part of a process that helps our bodies prepare for potentially dangerous situations. Even though some of those situations may not actually be dangerous, our bodies respond in the same way. Sometimes we don't even notice how our muscles become tense, but perhaps you clench your teeth slightly so your jaw feels tight, or maybe your shoulders become. Muscle tension can also be associated with backaches and tension headaches.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

One method of reducing muscle tension that people have found helpful is through a technique called Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). In progressive muscle relaxation exercises, you tense up particular muscles and then relax them, and then you practise this technique consistently.

preparing for relaxation

When you are beginning to practice progressive muscle relaxation exercises keep in mind the following points.

- **Physical injuries.** If you have any injuries, or a history of physical problems that may cause muscle pain, always consult your doctor before you start.
- **Select your surroundings.** Minimise the distraction to your five senses. Such as turning off the TV and radio, and using soft lighting.
- **Make yourself comfortable.** Use a chair that comfortably seats your body, including your head. Wear loose clothing, and take off your shoes.
- **Internal mechanics.** Avoid practicing after big, heavy meals, and do not practice after consuming any intoxicants, such as alcohol.

general procedure

- 1 Once you've set aside the time and place for relaxation, slow down your breathing and give yourself permission to relax.
- 2 When you are ready to begin, tense the muscle group described. Make sure you can feel the tension, but not so much that you feel a great deal of pain. Keep the muscle tensed for approximately 5 seconds.
- 3 Relax the muscles and keep it relaxed for approximately 10 seconds. It may be helpful to say something like "Relax" as you relax the muscle.
- 4 When you have finished the relaxation procedure, remain seated for a few moments allowing yourself to become alert.

Relaxation sequence

1. **Right hand and forearm.** Make a fist with your right hand.
2. **Right upper arm.** Bring your right forearm up to your shoulder to "make a muscle".
3. **Left hand and forearm.**
4. **Left upper arm.**
5. **Forehead.** Raise your eyebrows as high as they will go, as though you were surprised by something.
6. **Eyes and cheeks.** Squeeze your eyes tight shut.
7. **Mouth and jaw.** Open your mouth as wide as you can, as you might when you're yawning.
8. **Neck.** !!! Be careful as you tense these muscles. Face forward and then pull your head back slowly, as though you are looking up to the ceiling.
9. **Shoulders.** Tense the muscles in your shoulders as you bring your shoulders up towards your ears.
10. **Shoulder blades/Back.** Push your shoulder blades back, trying to almost touch them together, so that your chest is pushed forward.
11. **Chest and stomach.** Breathe in deeply, filling up your lungs and chest with air.
12. **Hips and buttocks.** Squeeze your buttock muscles
13. **Right upper leg.** Tighten your right thigh.
14. **Right lower leg.** !!! Do this slowly and carefully to avoid cramps. Pull your toes towards you to stretch the calf muscle.
15. **Right foot.** Curl your toes downwards.
16. **Left upper leg.** Repeat as for right upper leg.
17. **Left lower leg.** Repeat as for right lower leg.
18. **Left foot.** Repeat as for right foot.

Practice means progress. Only through practice can you become more aware of your muscles, how they respond with tension, and how you can relax them. Training your body to respond differently to stress is like any training – practising consistently is the key.

Activity ideas

Gentle Exercise

-see stretches hand out in pack

(See [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com) for further exercise ideas, type 'easy chair exercise')

Journaling

-A written record of your thoughts, feelings and observations

Mindful colouring

Colouring has shown to be a good distraction technique and improve concentration -see templates attached

Relaxation (see hand-outs in pack)

-Mindfulness

-Deep breathing exercise

-Progressive Muscle relaxation

-<http://www.balanceapp.com> (currently offering a free subscription for meditation)

Crosswords/puzzles

- See printed ones in pack or <http://freedailycrosswords.com/> if you have access to the internet

Library Apps

-to access magazine use www.rbdigital.com (cost involved)

-to access free books use Borrowbox <https://www.borrowbox.com/>

Courses/educational

www.futurelearn.com

www.coursera.com

www.udemy.com

Museum virtual tours

<https://www.mentalfloss.com/article/75809/12-world-class-museums-you-can-visit-online>

6 must-do daily exercises

A regular exercise routine can help you stay healthy and avoid injury. Get back to basics with these 6 daily exercises for at home or at work.



LEG STRETCH

Hold onto a chair with one hand, grab the top of your foot and pull your foot towards your buttock until you feel a gentle stretch in front of the thigh.

Hold for 2-3 breaths and repeat on the other side.



CALF STRETCH

Stand in front of a wall with one leg forward and one leg behind with heels on the ground, feet parallel and back leg straight. Keep your body upright and bend your front knee forward to feel a stretch in the calf.

Hold for 2-3 breaths and repeat on the other side.



SQUATS

Hold onto a chair. Keep a straight back with feet on the ground and hips above your knees. Slowly lower your body as if you were sitting down into a chair.

Do 5-10 reps.



GLUTE STRETCH

Sit on a chair with your foot over the opposite knee. Push on your knee to open the leg and sit up straight. Lean forward until you feel a gentle stretch in your buttock.

Hold for 2-3 breaths and repeat on the other side.



BACK STRETCH

Place hands on your lower back, gently lean back and stretch to the point of tension not pain.

Hold this stretch for 2-3 breaths.



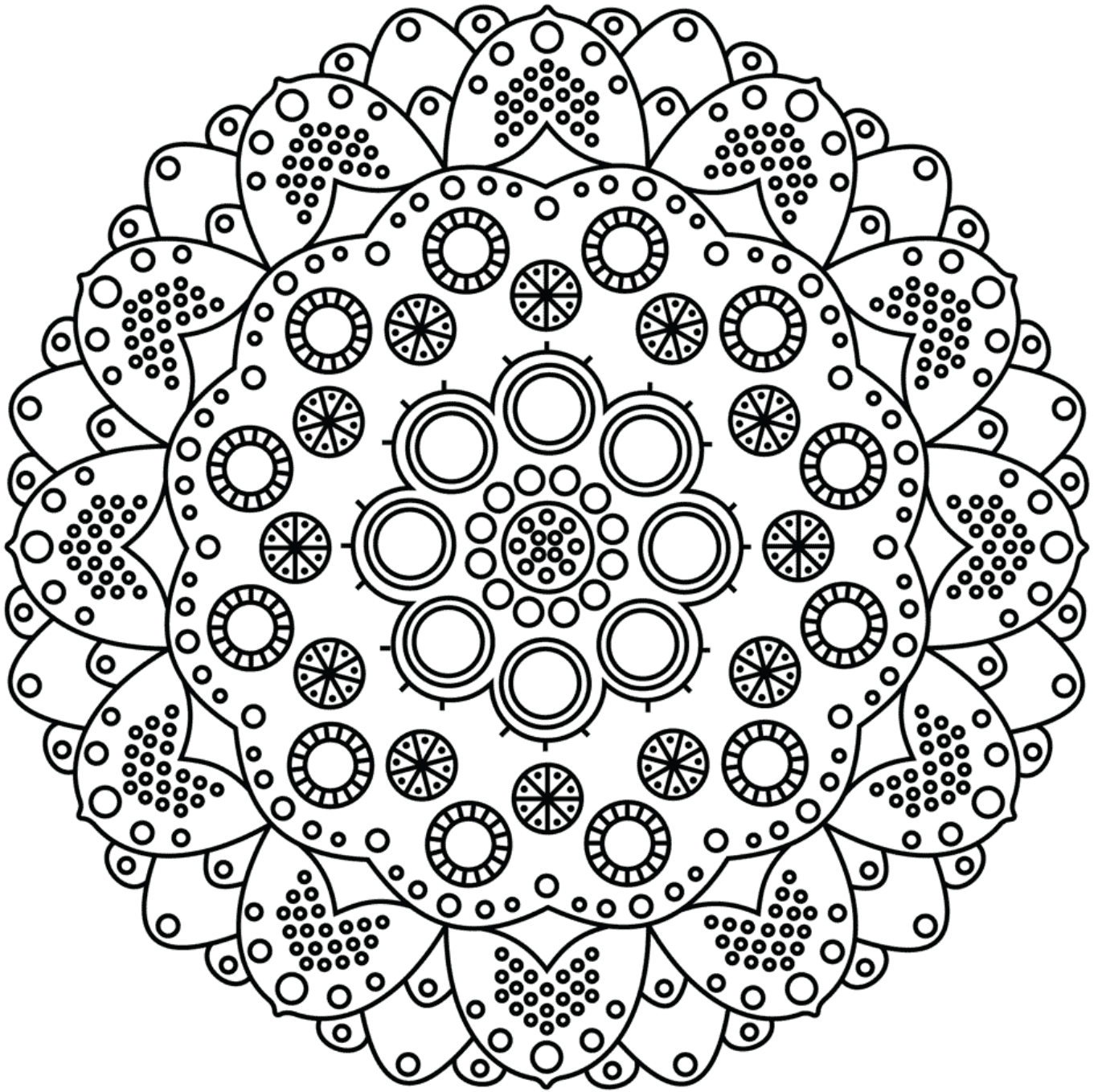
NECK STRETCH

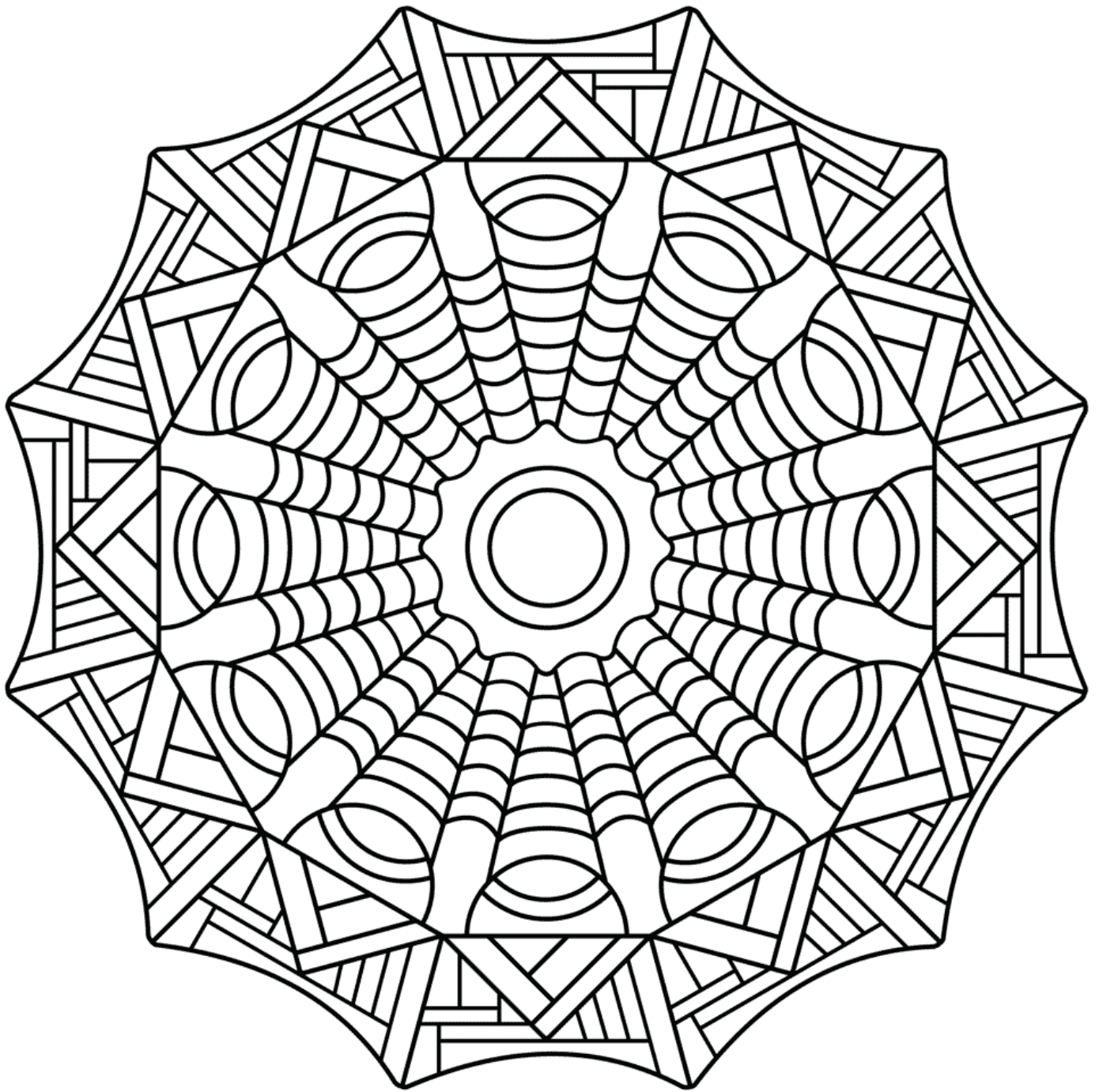
Tuck the chin in. Without turning the head, slowly tilt your head sideways to bring your ear to your shoulder. Repeat on the other side.

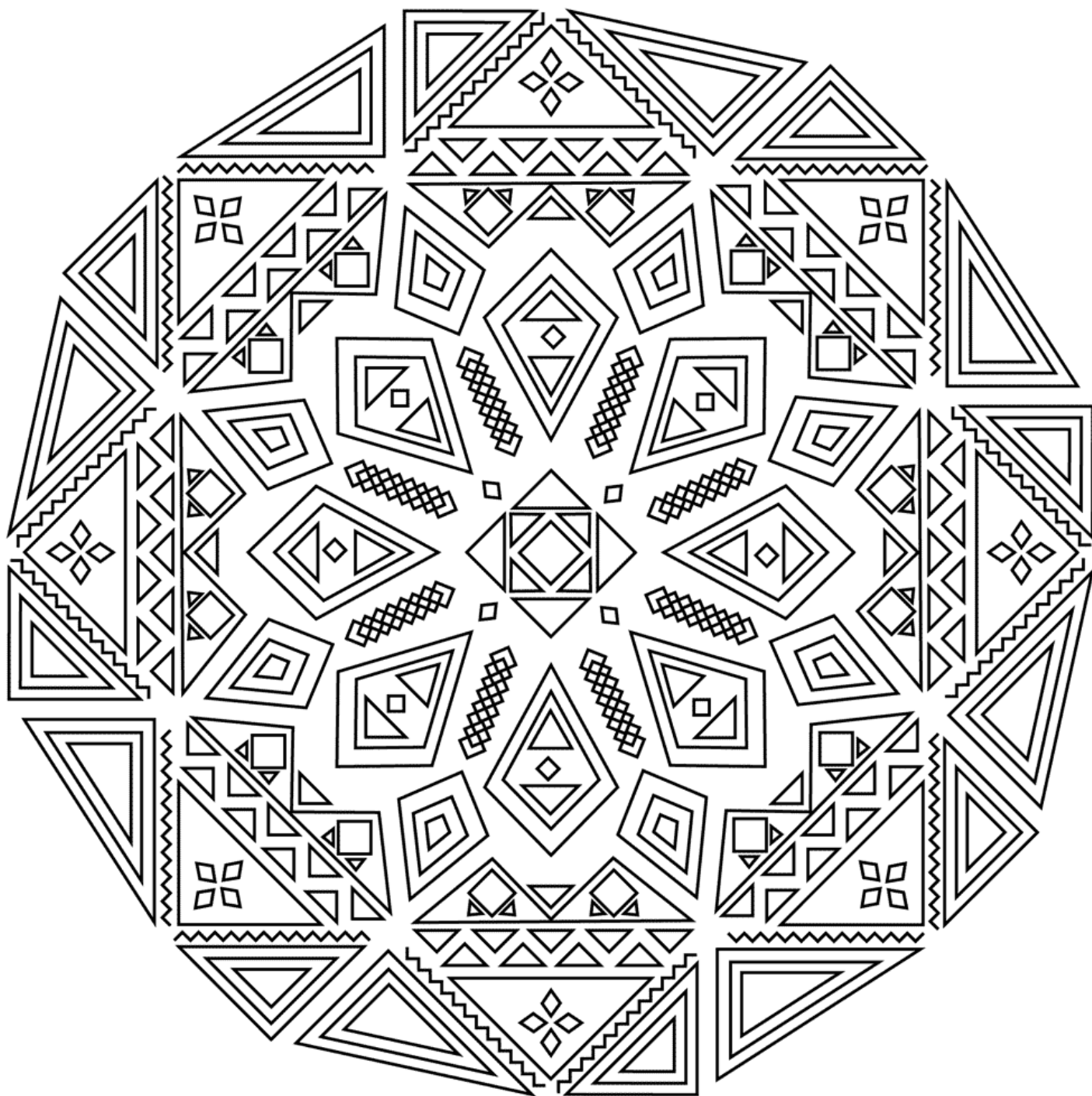
Hold for 2-3 breaths and repeat on the other side.

POINTS TO NOTE:

- If you suffer from an existing condition, please consult your health care practitioner before beginning.
- If you feel pain, stop or back off the stretch.
- Remember to breathe as you stretch.







16th March

ACROSS

- 1 Landscaper's stock
4 Sutherland specialty
8 Dieter's main course
13 Morning deposits
17 Go briskly, to a poet
18 Copper
19 Make someone happy
20 Demonic agenda
21 "The ___ Man" (1980 film)
23 Cryptographers' discoveries
24 Pierre's mom
25 Look searchingly
26 Actor Jeremy
28 Cleaned a slate
30 Genealogy diagram
32 Brawny

- 34 Wheat husk
35 Skating venues
37 Lettuce unit
38 Causing a rift
42 Whiz-bang pilot
43 Nudges
45 Outmoded
46 Despicable person
47 Emulates an Avon lady
49 Curls around
51 Add hands
52 Harasses
54 Gamin's garb
55 Parson's home
56 Military students
59 During
61 Isaac Mizrahi's employer
62 Garner
63 NYSE membership
64 Mob scenes
66 Plays on words
67 Utters
69 Nurtures
73 Compass dir.
74 Item in the trunk
75 Speak
77 Part of an

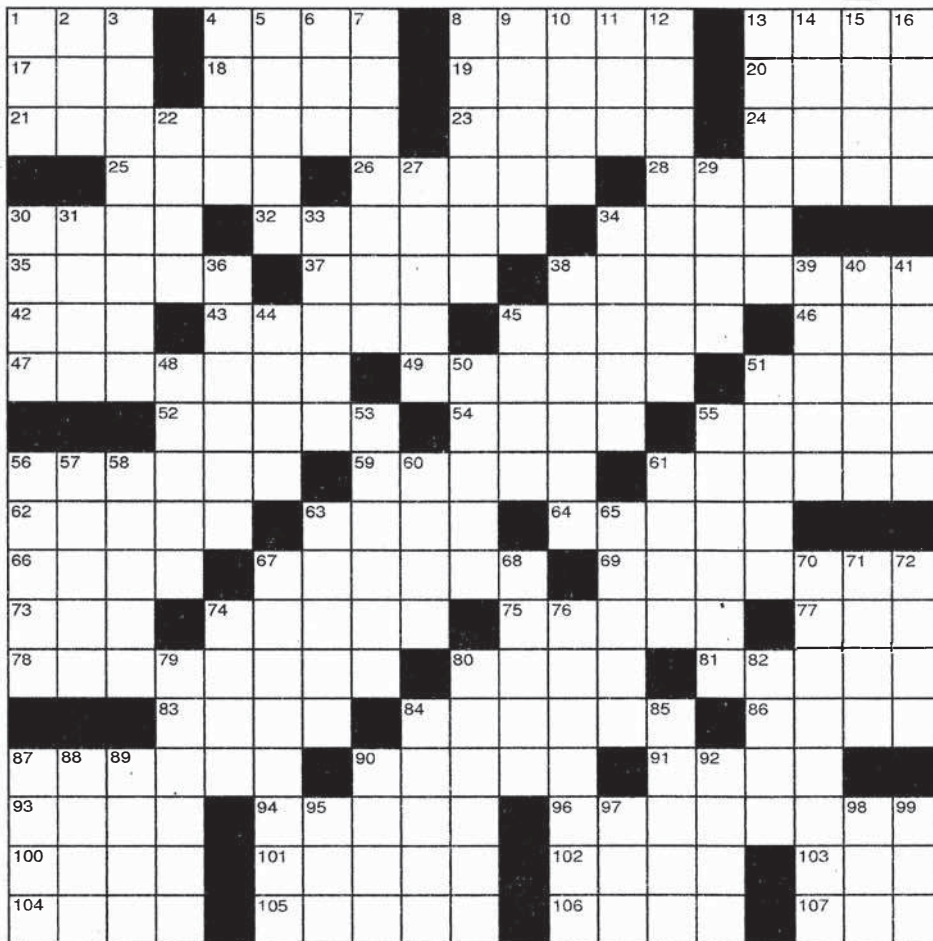
- infant's routine
78 Some Coast Guard workers
80 Resistance
81 "___ Flyer" (Elijah Wood film)
83 Cerussite and anglesite
84 DeeJay's chitchat
86 Fasting period
87 Afraid
90 Love at ___ sight
91 On an ocean voyage
93 Moonshine grain
94 Key
96 Lighthouse toppers
100 Pot builder
101 Emma Roberts, to Julia
102 Border
103 Conger
104 Symbol on a musical score
105 The search for more
106 Appear to be
107 "L.A. Law"

alum Susan

DOWN

- 1 "___ Done Him Wrong" (Mae West film)
2 Crisco product
3 Excavated
4 Yearn
5 Breeds
6 Bucolic hostel
7 Clad
8 Response to a motion
9 "___ came a spider..."
10 Boys 'round the pub
11 Cleaned one's plate
12 Merits
13 Supply's economic partner
14 "___ Bayou" (1997 film)
15 Philippe Petit path
16 "Rosebud," e.g.
22 Look secretly
27 Weenie ___

- 29 Speakeasy invasion
30 Golf hazard
31 Wedding confetti
33 Them there
34 Mosquito attacks
36 Gymnasts' feats
38 "Lost in Space" robot's shout
39 Cake topper
40 Villainess in Kesey's cuckoo's nest
41 Play the host
44 Merlot and Margaux
45 Indicator
48 Apply the vinaigrette
50 Use the Palmer method
51 Unmerciful
53 Pledges
55 Substance
56 Job, to a yegg
57 Tickle one's funny bone
58 "Great" dogs
60 Animosity
61 Horn sound
63 Twinklers
65 Picture
67 "Faster than a bullet..."
68 Puts into categories
70 Esteemed
71 Tess in "Paint Your Wagon"
72 Dick and Jane's dog
74 Indubitable
76 Confuses
79 Bix Beiderbecke's instrument
80 Scurried
82 Toward the sheltered side
84 Slice
85 Spectrum
87 Wound's yield
88 Wizard's hat, e.g.
89 Knacks
90 Hightail it
92 Curtail
95 Knight identifier
97 Block or cannon suffix
98 Mamie Eisenhower, ___ Doud
99 Like a fox



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17th March

ACROSS

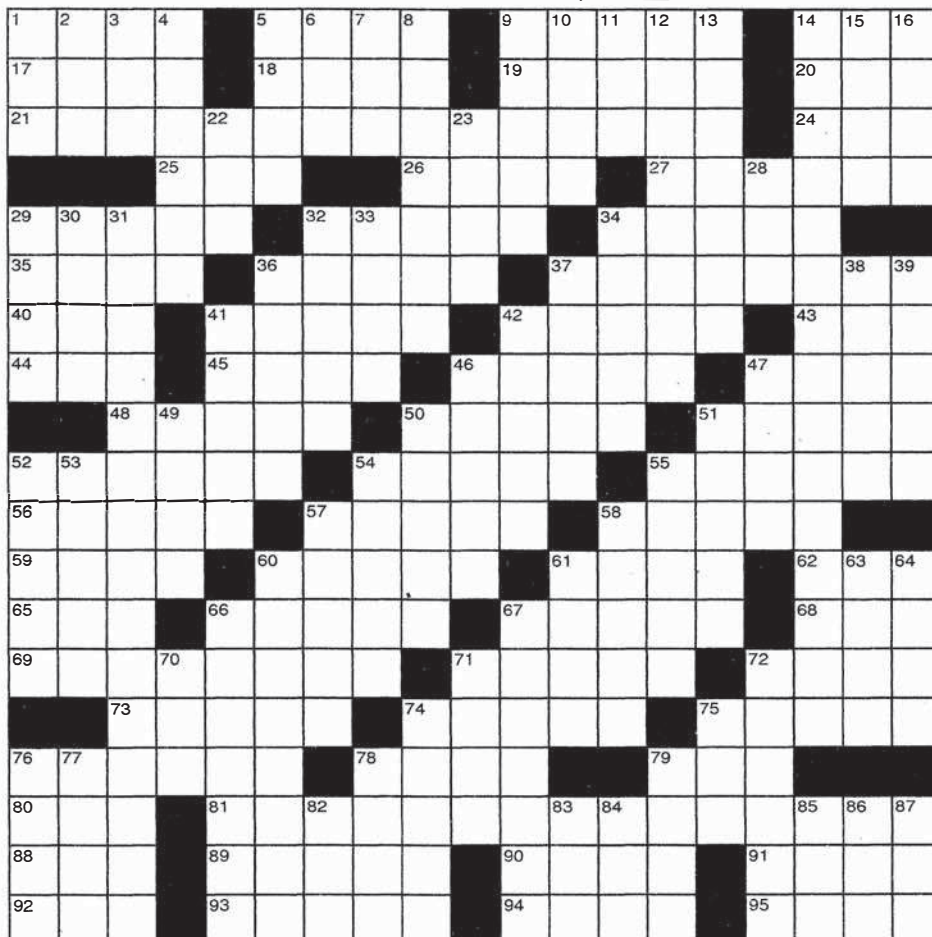
- 1 Aid
5 AARP members' funds
9 "___ of Blues" (Elvis)
14 Child
17 Ellipse
18 Amalgamate
19 "Homicide" director
20 Blue Cross alternative: abbr.
21 Progressive pulse
24 Bled
25 "___ Time at All"
26 Sleeping Beauty's wake-up call
27 Shade providers
29 Sticky stuff
32 Scottish cake
34 Vigor
35 Preceding nights
36 "Fred ___" (2007 film)
37 Fine points
40 Nervous twitch
41 Perfect angel
42 Computer connector
43 Child's trial or adult's reward
44 College website ending
45 Naval VIPs
46 Removes peels
47 Roman reproach
48 Bumper cars et al.
50 Frontier enclaves
51 Longed
52 Séance visitor
54 ___ screen (iPhone control)
55 Pericles' city
56 Wheelchair-bound "Glee" character
57 Thora of "American Beauty"
58 Sprout
59 Flanagan's charges
60 Will Smith film
61 Swarm
62 Frequently, in verse
65 Recede
66 Marten's cousin

- 67 Opera singers
68 Send flowers and candy, e.g.
69 Trustworthy
71 Muffled
72 Plant with fronds
73 MacDowell of "Cedar Cove"
74 City in central Georgia
75 Kegler locale
76 Desperado
78 Pledge
79 Biblical judge
80 Noah's masterpiece
81 Peruse web pages
88 Bishopric
89 Not overt
90 Big Dipper component
91 Succumb to fatigue
92 Stetson, e.g.
93 Shade of gray
94 Poultry flavoring
95 Stretch across

DOWN

- 1 "___ do I love thee?"
2 Topsy's playmate
3 Washroom: abbr.
4 Features of some window shades
5 Speculative
6 Prairie schooner track
7 "___ Wednesday" (Liz Taylor film)
8 Hunt for
9 Delight
10 Yoga students' needs
11 Ratite bird
12 Goods and ___
13 "Ms." VIP
14 Quit
15 Epps of "Alfie"
16 Heaps
22 Countdown end
23 '57 DeSoto features
28 Use curlers
29 1995 U.S. Open champ Sampras
30 Ardent
31 Psychological crutch
32 ___ down (loses weight)
33 Pantry items
34 Mashed potatoes and green beans, e.g.
36 West Pointer
37 Yankee's home
38 Ingested
39 Taters
41 Sad Sack's girlfriend
42 Sousa opus
46 Joey's spot
47 Grand Canyon feedback
49 Fleur-de-lis
50 Constrain
51 Molecule components
52 Curved sword
53 Unmanned spacecraft
54 Champ's holding
55 "Full speed ___!"

- 57 Certain belt
58 Number of Snow White's pals
60 Customary
61 Singer Gobbi
63 Golfer's warning
64 Fashionable
66 "Satan's ___" (1969 biker flick)
67 Wonderland figure
70 Not Rep. or Dem.
71 SAT section
72 Belles, at a ball
74 Unglossy
75 Malty beverage
76 Wild party
77 Department
78 "Out ___" (Jon Voight film)
79 To be, in Toulouse
82 TV mfr.
83 Give ___ try
84 Old horse
85 Cut short
86 Tide competitor
87 Lacrosse team number



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