



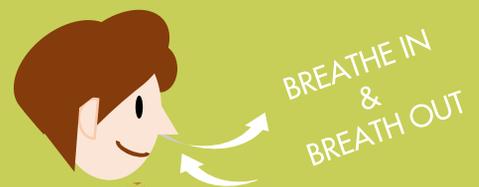
BODY



# SELF-CARE AND COPING SKILLS IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS



MIND



This handbook was made possible through the generous financial support of the US Department of State's Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration. It was written and designed by Kanokwan Jirathongkhamchote, and edited by Dr. Pramod Shyangwa (IOM Thailand) and Guglielmo Schinina (IOM Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Section).

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Publisher: International Organization for Migration  
18th Floor, Rajanakarn Building  
3 South Sathorn Road  
10120 Sathorn, Bangkok  
Thailand  
Tel.: +66 2 343 93 00  
Fax: +66 2 343 94 99  
Email: [iomthailand@iom.int](mailto:iomthailand@iom.int)

# SELF-CARE AND COPING SKILLS IN STRESSFUL SITUATIONS



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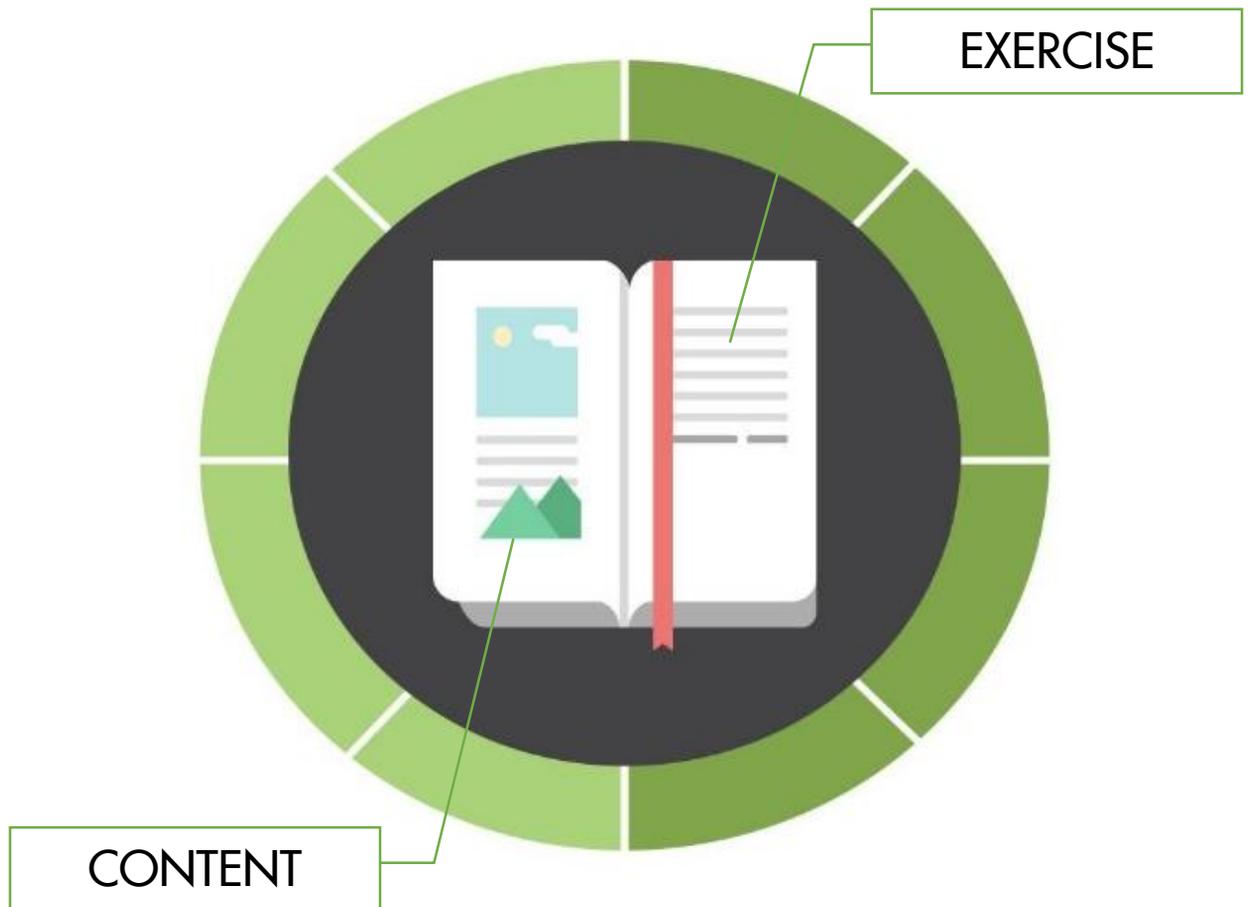
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# INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this booklet, you are likely to be a migrant in detention. We acknowledge that being detained is very stressful. The purpose of this book is to provide you with basic information about stress and to help you develop some skills that can help you overcome stress. Each topic in this book is explained with simple messages and illustrations. For each topic, there is an exercise that can help you to practice by yourself when you feel like doing so.



# HOW TO USE THIS BOOK



The left-hand pages of the book present the content. The right-hand pages describe the relevant exercises. Please read the content thoroughly before doing the exercises. These exercises can be used by anyone regardless of age, gender, and religion.

# PART I BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT STRESS



Do you know stress? What is stress? And why do we need to know about it?

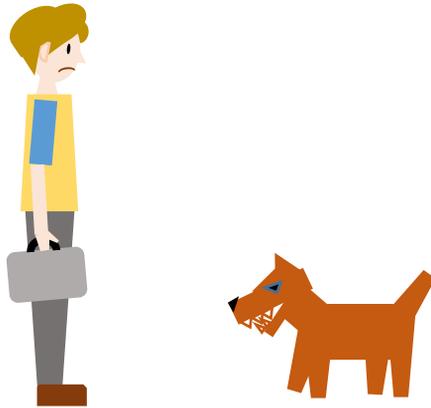
Stress is a normal reaction to some events in our life. Everyone can be stressed and stress affects many aspects of our life. That's why we have to understand it. If we understand, we can better cope with it. In part I, you will learn some basic information about stress, what causes stress, and how stress affects us.

# WHAT IS STRESS?

Stress is a normal emotional and physical reaction to situations that make us feel fearful, anxious, and unsafe. It is life saving, because it makes our body and mind ready to withstand danger, and unpleasant situations. But too much stress can be harmful for our body and mind.



# STRESSFUL SITUATION



# STRESS RESPONSE

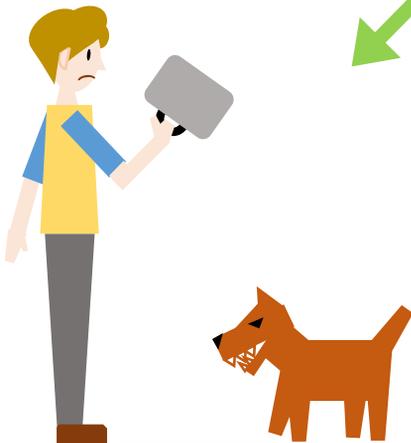
THOUGHT  
TRY TO FIND A  
WAY OUT

BODY  
TENSE MUSCLES  
OR  
RAPID HEARTBEAT

EMOTION  
WORRY  
FEAR



# ACTION



FIGHT



FLIGHT

The illustration on page 5 shows how stress is considered life saving in dangerous situations. When the man saw the dog, he could sense that this dog was dangerous and he felt stressed. His body, thoughts and emotions changed to respond to this situation. His heart beat faster to pump blood through out the body and his muscles were tense. His thought focused on finding a way out. Moreover, worry and fear made him be more cautious and watchful. These changes helped him protect himself by fighting or running away.

On the next page, you will learn more about the changes in our body, thoughts, emotions, and actions when you are under stress.



# WHAT HAPPENS TO US UNDER STRESS

When you feel stressed, there are many changes in our body, thoughts, emotions, and actions. These changes will help you overcome the difficult situations.

## BODY

Heart beats faster  
High blood pressure  
Breathe rapidly  
Muscle tension  
Sweating  
Restlessness

## THOUGHT

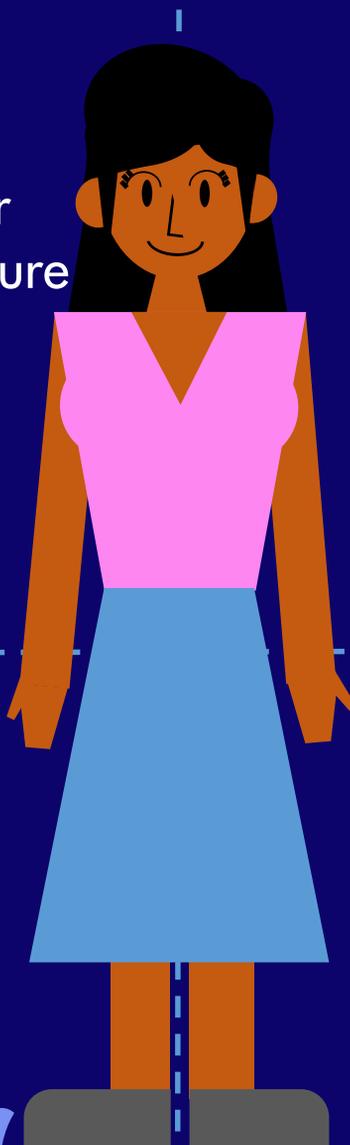
Preoccupation  
Excessive thinking  
Negative thinking  
Lack of focus  
Lack of concentration

Worry  
Anger  
Fear  
Unsafe  
Threatened  
Overwhelmed

Fight to overcome the difficulties  
Escape or run away from the situation

## EMOTION

## ACTION



# EXERCISE NOTICE YOURSELF WHEN YOU FEEL STRESSED

Notice changes in yourself when you feel stressed.

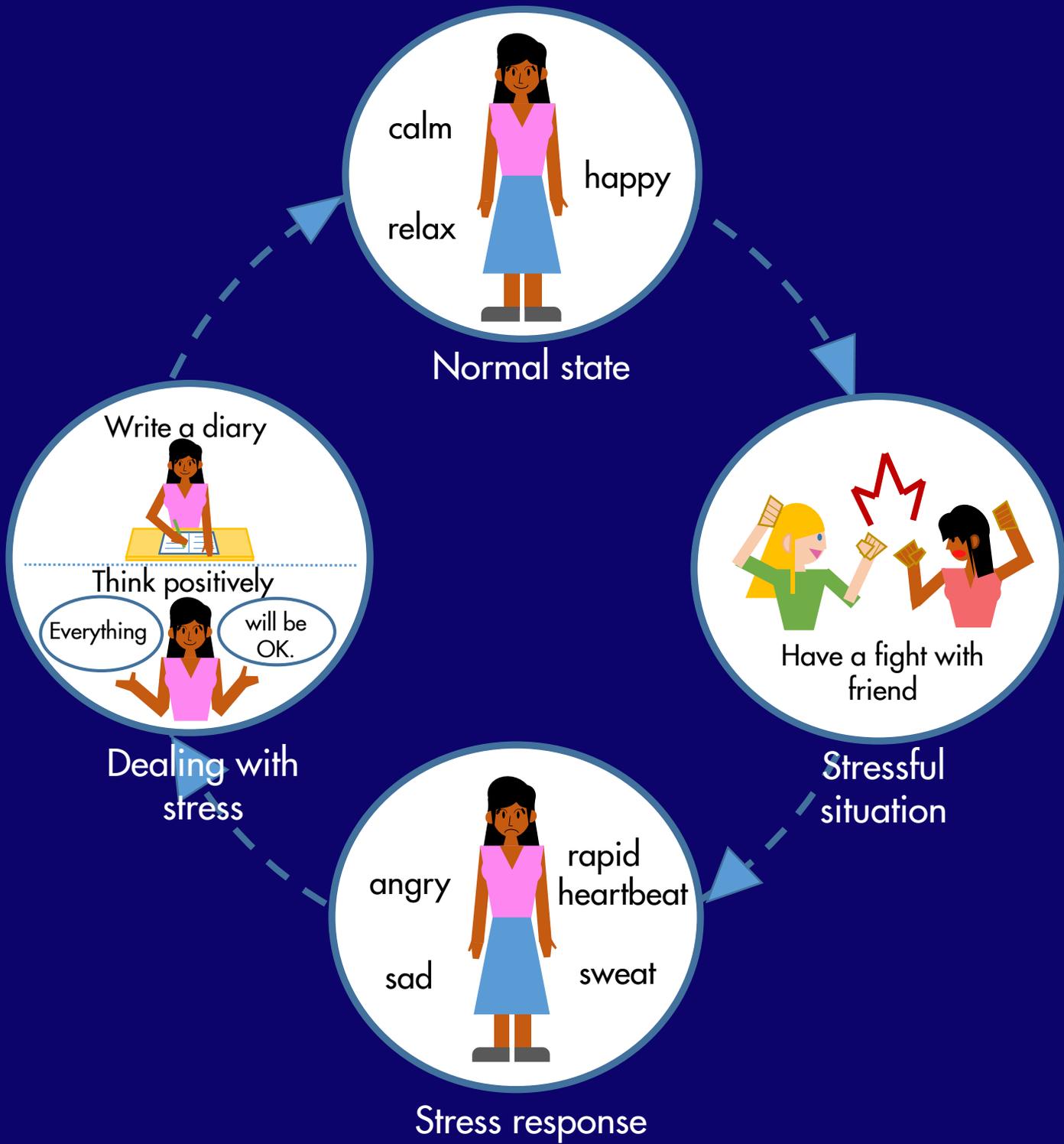
**BODY**

**THOUGHT**

**EMOTION**

**ACTION**

# STRESS CYCLE



# STRESS CYCLE

The illustrations on page 9 demonstrates the stress cycle. At the beginning, the woman was in a normal state. She felt calm and happy. After that, she felt stressed because she had a fight with her friend. Her response to stress was feeling upset or sad. Then, she dealt with stress by writing a diary to express feeling, thinking positively, and relaxing. She reconciled with her friend and returned to her normal state, feeling calm and happy. This means our body, thought and emotions will return to a normal state when danger or unpleasant situations end or pass and we can regain a sense of safety.

On the following page, you will learn about the factors that cause stress.

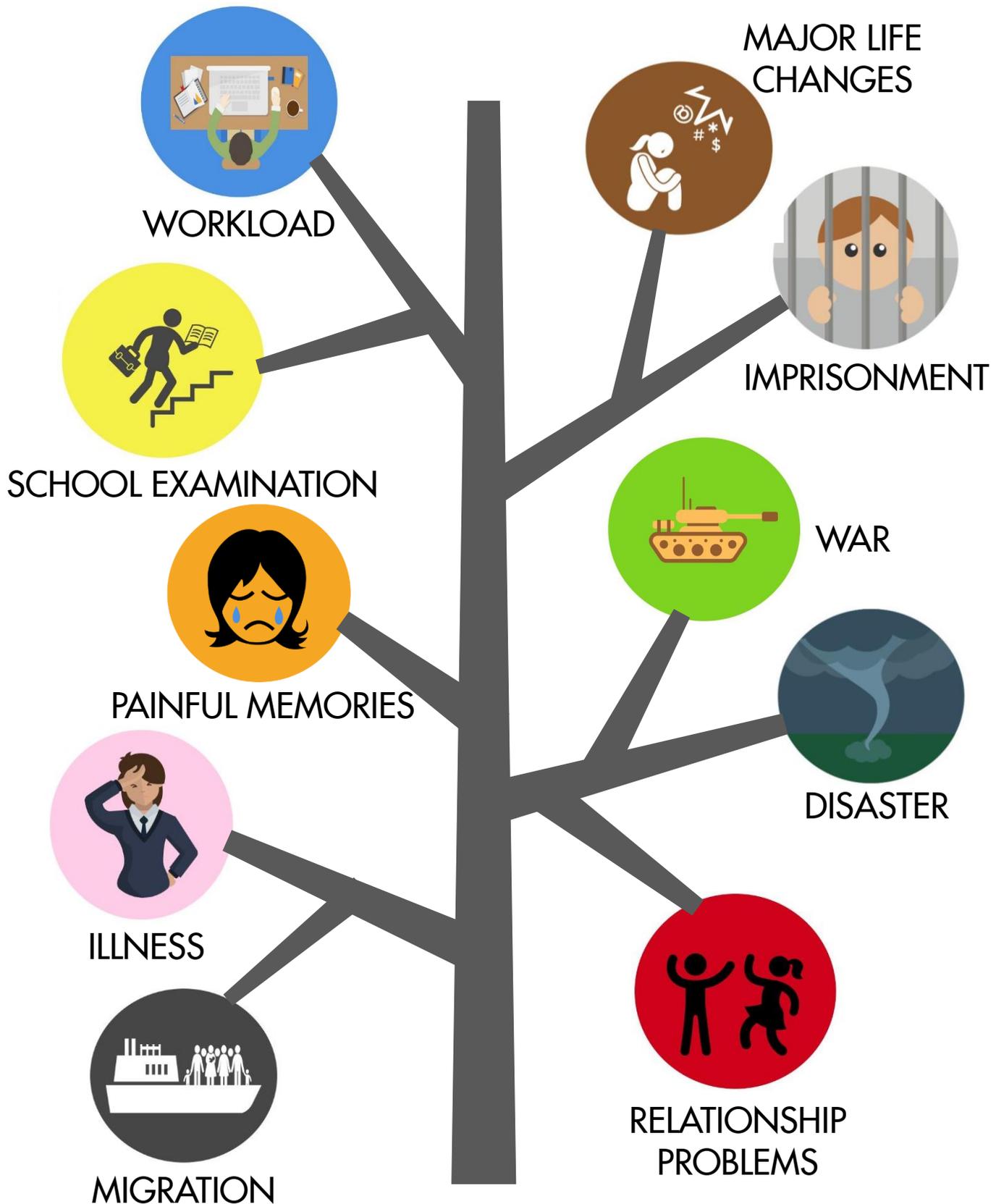
# CAUSES OF STRESS

Those factors that cause stress are called "STRESSORS".



The following page is the example of common stressors and stressors in Immigration Detention Center.

# COMMON STRESSORS



# STRESSORS IN IMMIGRATION DETENTION CENTER



# EXERCISE IDENTIFY YOUR STRESSORS

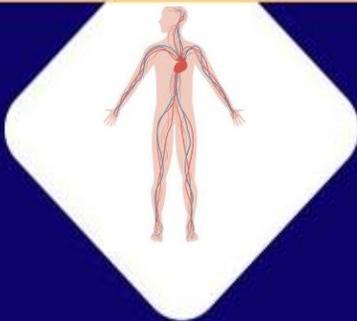


To be aware of your stressors will help you gain better understanding about yourself and the situation you are in. When you understand that, you will be able to deal with stress effectively. Take your time to think about what makes you feel stressed.

# SIGNS OF STRESS

Stress can affect your body, thought, emotion, and action. Next page shows a signs of stress checklist. It is a self-report checklist that will help you be aware of your stress level.

## BODY



## THOUGHT



# SIGNS OF STRESS

## EMOTION



## ACTION

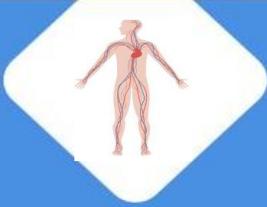


# EXERCISE

## SIGNS OF STRESS CHECKLIST

Instruction: Check each item that describes a symptom that you have experienced during the last week and record the frequency of each symptom.

### BODY



#### Symptom

#### Frequency

- Headaches .....
- Aches and pains .....
- Rapid heartbeat .....
- Tiredness .....
- Muscle tension .....

### THOUGHT



- Poor concentration .....
- Memory problems .....
- Constant worrying .....
- Negative thinking .....
- Indecision .....

### EMOTION



- Moodiness .....
- Depression .....
- Anxiety/worry .....
- Inability to relax .....
- Fearfulness .....
- Anger .....
- Aggression .....

### ACTION



- Eating too much or too little .....
- Sleeping more or less .....
- Restlessness .....
- Change in usual behavior .....
- Increasing in smoking or drinking .....

# DEALING WITH STRESS



Dealing with stress effectively will help you reduce its impact, maintain your well-being, and regain a sense of control. Before learning self-help techniques to deal with stress in part II, please do the exercises on the following page first.

# EXERCISE HOW DO YOU RELIEVE YOUR STRESS?

When you feel stressed, please list what you normally do to relieve this feeling.



Example:

When I feel stressed, I talk to my friend.

When I feel stressed, I ...

- 1 .....
- 2 .....
- 3 .....
- 4 .....
- 5 .....

---

# PART II

## WAYS TO COPE WITH STRESS

---



BODY



MIND

---

In part II, you will learn various skills that help you deal with stress effectively. These skills regard everyday activities that help in preventing the negative effects of stress, and some techniques that you can perform to lower your stress.

---

# DAILY ROUTINES



EATING  
FOOD



DRINKING  
WATER



PERSONAL  
HYGIENE



PHYSICAL  
ACTIVITY

To deal with stress effectively, we need to take care of our body by maintaining daily routines. The following page is what we have to do to keep healthy.

# DAILY ROUTINES



## EATING FOOD

Try to eat enough amount of food to gain energy and keep your body functioning.



## DRINKING WATER

Try to drink 5-8 glasses of water per day, as this is the amount recommended.



## PERSONAL HYGIENE

To prevent body from illness, try to maintain personal hygiene habits such as brush teeth, wash hands, and take a shower.



## PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

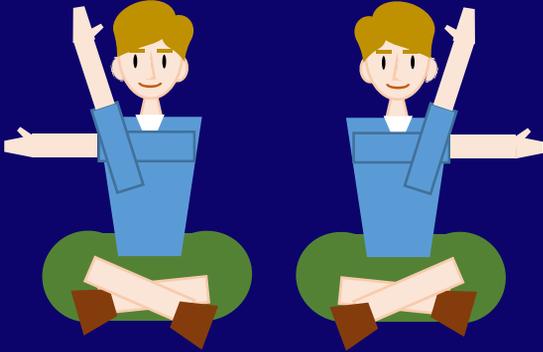
Try to engage in activity that has bodily movement (such as stretching, walking) as much as possible.

# EXERCISE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY



Living in limited space in detention for a long time can affect your health. The following page shows basic stretching exercises that you can practice by yourself in a small space. The exercise consists of upper and lower part of body stretching.

# UPPER PART OF BODY

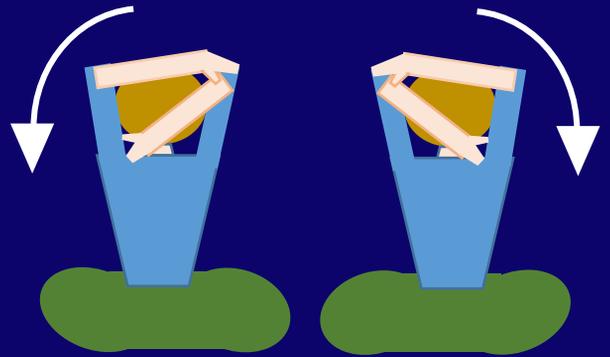


## SHOULDER

1. Lift left arm across the chest to the right side.
2. Lock your left arm with right arm and hold for 10 seconds.
3. Release and switch side.

## SHOULDER & ARM

1. Raise right elbow above your head.
2. Pull your elbow to the left side and hold for 10 seconds.
3. Release and switch side.

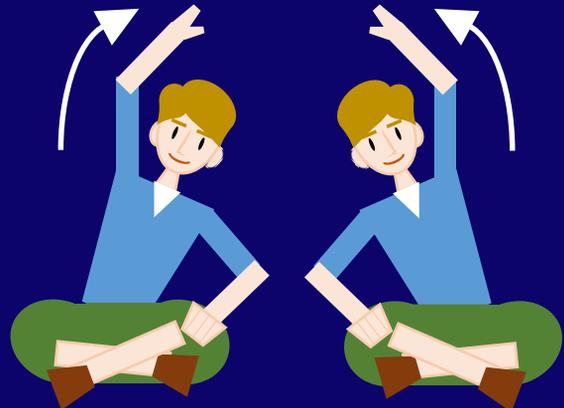


## UPPER BACK

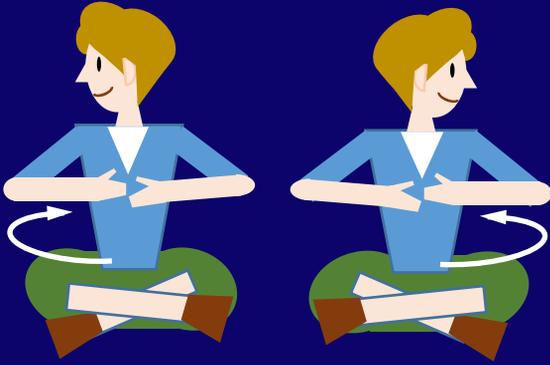
1. Spread both arms.
2. Raise both arms up and stretch as high as you can.
3. Hold your arms for 10 seconds and release.

## WAIST

1. Raise right arm overhead and rest left hand on your waist.
2. Lean your body to the left, keep your arm alongside your ears and your chest open.
3. Hold the posture for 10 seconds.
4. Release and switch side.



# LOWER PART OF BODY

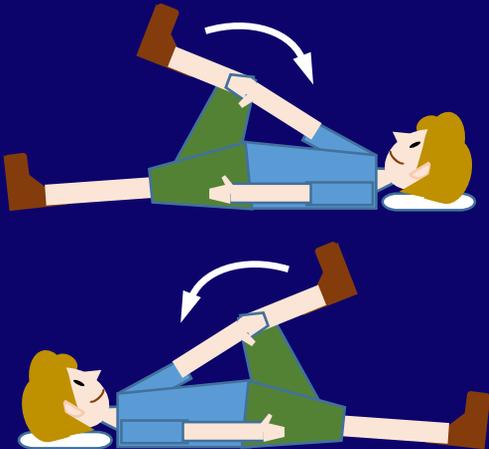
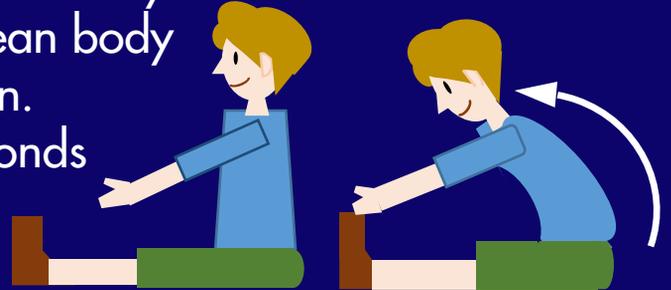


## WAIST & LOWER BACK

1. Lift both arms up and bend elbow.
2. Twist body back and forth from right to left 10 times.

## LOWER BACK & LEG

1. Sit with leg outstretched in front of you.
2. Raise arms overhead and lean body forward as much as you can.
3. Hold the posture for 10 seconds and release.



## KNEE & THIGH

1. Lie down
2. Bend right knee to your chest.
3. Hold the posture with left hand for 10 seconds.
4. Release and switch side.

## ANKLE

1. Sit with leg outstretched in front of you.
2. Point feet up toward you and point it down. Repeat this step 5 times.
3. Move feet side to side 5 times.



# COPING SKILLS

Coping skills are skills that you need to practice in order to deal with your stress. In this part, you will learn 3 skills which are Relaxation exercises, Breathing exercises, and Mindfulness.



RELAXATION  
EXERCISES



BREATHING  
EXERCISES

COPING  
SKILLS



MINDFULNESS

# HOW TO PRACTICE COPING SKILLS

Here are some exercises on coping skills you can easily practice in the cell by yourself. You do not have to master all skills as some skills might work and some might not work for you. Before practicing any exercise, please read the instructions clearly. Remember, if any exercises makes you feel uncomfortable or make you feel worst, you better stop practicing that exercise or practice other types of coping skills.



## RELAXATION EXERCISES

Count down  
Focus  
The tree  
Light steam  
Progressive muscle  
relaxation



## BREATHING EXERCISES

Belly breathing  
Square breathing



## MINDFULNESS

Basic  
Mindfulness



# RELAXATION EXERCISES

What is relaxation?

“Relaxation is a state of deep and complete rest and calm, when your entire mind and body are completely in balance, and completely at ease.” (Muir, 2010, p.16)



# RELAXATION EXERCISES

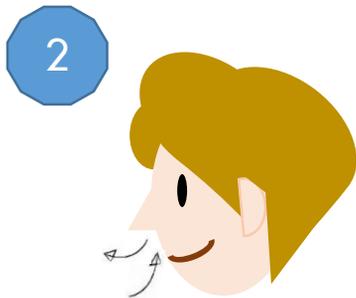


There are many ways to help you feel calm and relaxed, for example, sitting in a quiet place, listening to soothing music, and doing exercise. In detention, some of the activities can be praying, talking to others, and writing a diary. These various methods are called RELAXATION EXERCISES. Relaxation exercises that you will learn are *Countdown*, *Focus*, *The Tree*, *Light Steam*, and *Progressive Muscle Relaxation*.

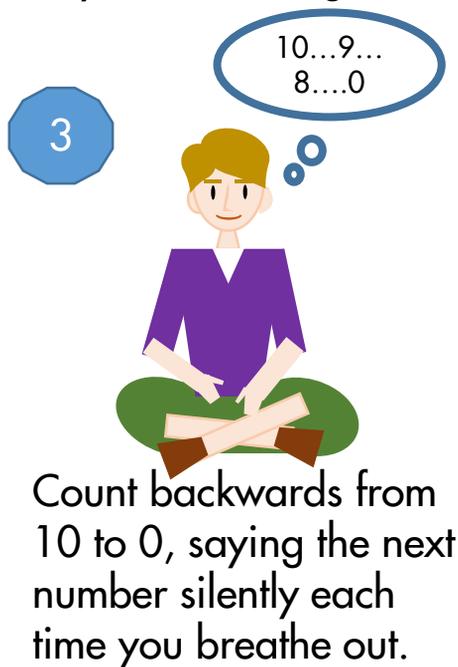
# EXERCISE

## COUNTDOWN & FOCUS

### COUNTDOWN



Slow down and focus on your breathing.



### FOCUS



Think about soothing word such as:

- R...e...l...a...x
- P...e...a...c...e
- Calm.. and.. quiet
- Slow... down



Repeat a word silently and slowly in your mind.

# EXERCISE THE TREE



## Instruction

1. Sit or lie down.
2. Imagine the tree you like as clear as possible.  
(root, branch, trunk, leaf)
3. Imagine yourself communicating with the tree, for example, lean on the tree, lie down under the tree, hug the tree. Choose position that make you feel comfortable.
4. Imagine that the energy from the tree flows to your body and make your body relax.

# EXERCISE LIGHT STEAM



## Instruction

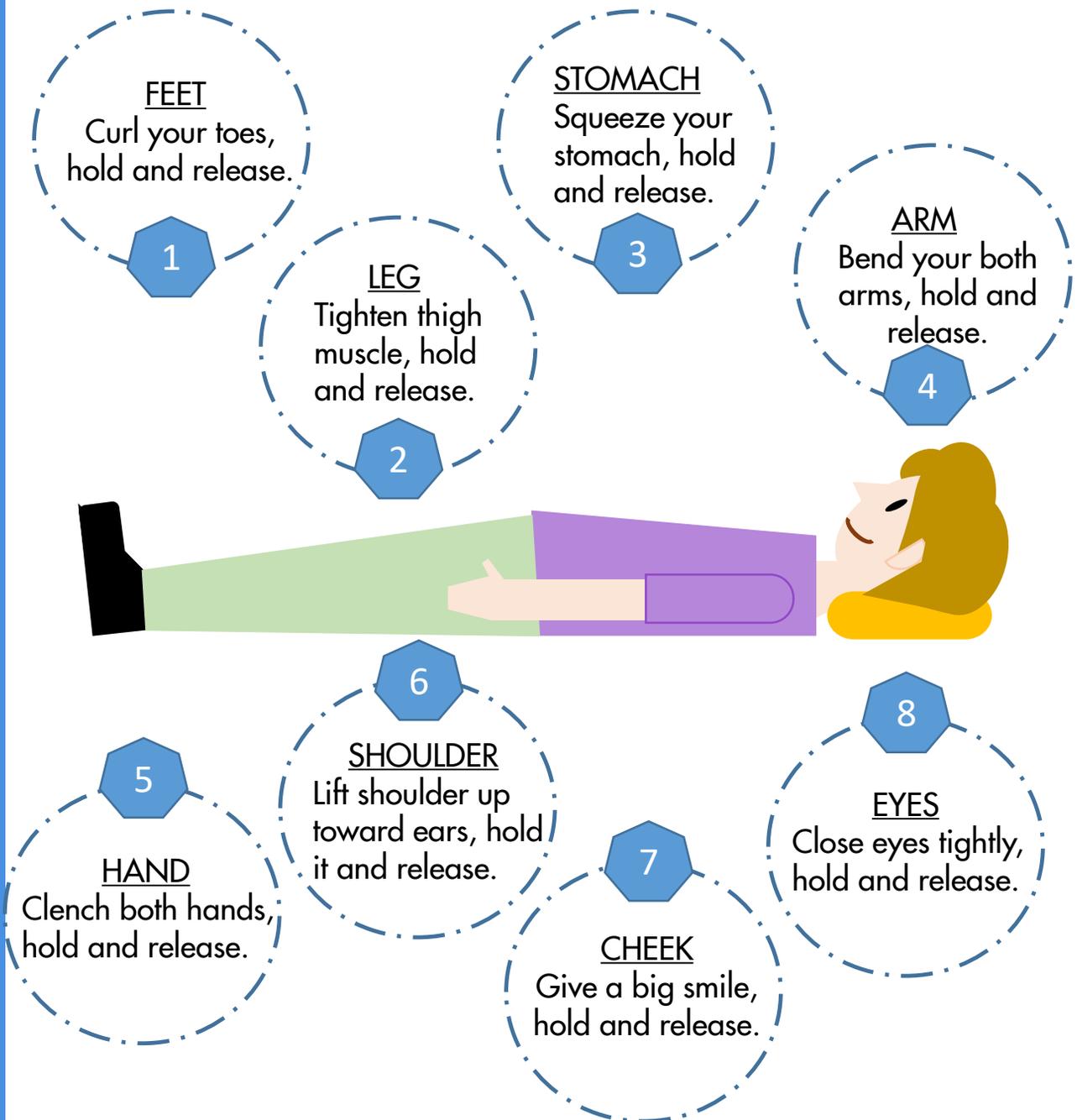
1. Sit or lie down.
2. Scan your body from head to toe and notice which part of your body that make you feel uncomfortable.
3. Imagine healing light coming from the sky. You can choose the color of the light that makes you feel relaxed, calm, and comfortable.
4. Imagine the healing light slowly heals your body from head to toe and focus on uncomfortable part.
5. When you feel relaxed and comfortable enough, imagine the healing light is absorbed by the ground.

# EXERCISE

## PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

In this exercise, you have to tighten and release different muscle groups from feet to head. Duration of tightened muscle is 5 seconds and released muscle is 10 seconds.

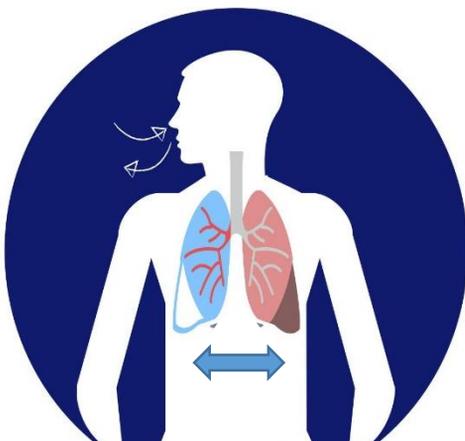
Follow step 1-8



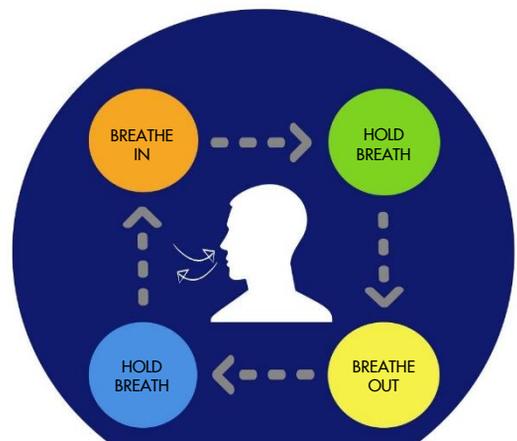


# BREATHING EXERCISES

Our breathing can be affected by stress. When we feel distressed, our breath will be rapid, short, and shallow. Breathing exercises are practice that focus on deep and slow breathing that will help you decrease tension and regain calm. In this part, you will learn two exercises: *Belly Breathing* and *Square Breathing*.



BELLY BREATHING



SQUARE BREATHING

# VOCABULARY

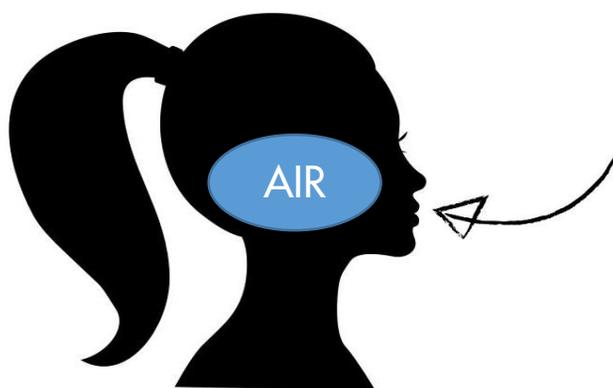
Below are words and definitions that you need to know before you practice breathing exercises.



**BREATHE IN**  
Take air into the lungs

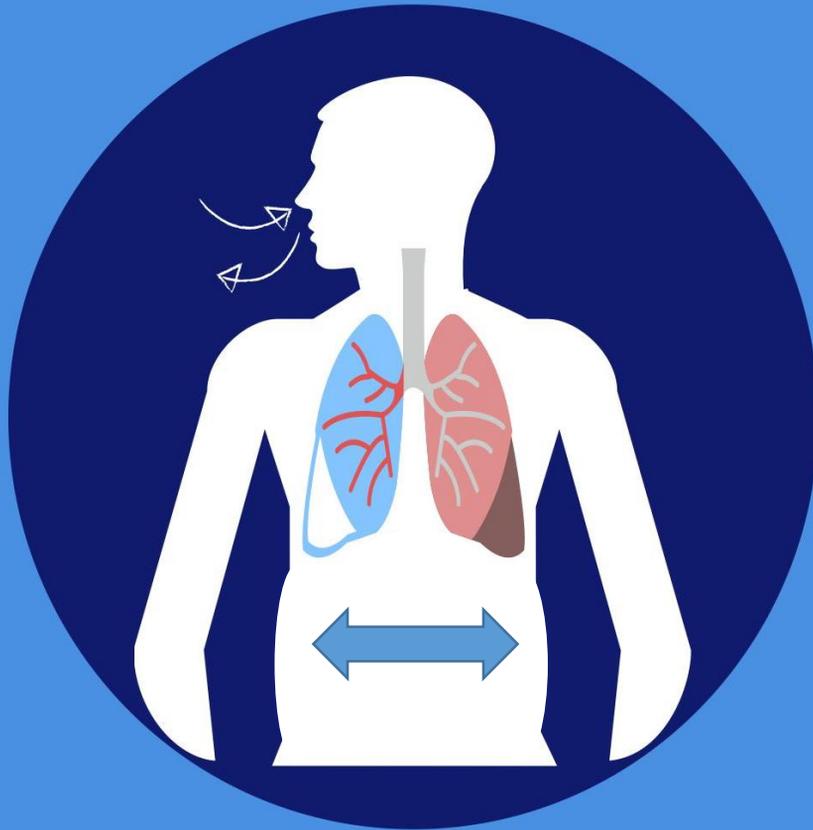


**BREATHE OUT**  
Send air out of the lungs



**HOLD BREATH**  
To breathe in and not let the air out for a while

# BELLY BREATHING

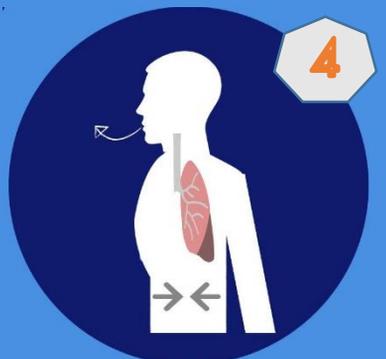
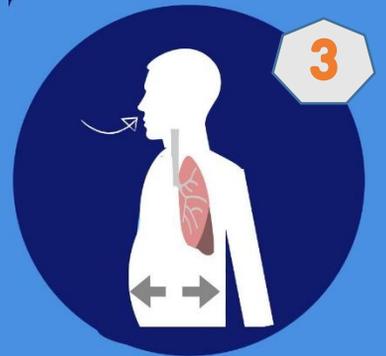


Belly breathing is a deep breathing exercise that will help the lungs gain more air than shallow breathing or chest breathing. This exercise can reduce stress and anxiety and bring about calmness and peace if you practice it regularly.

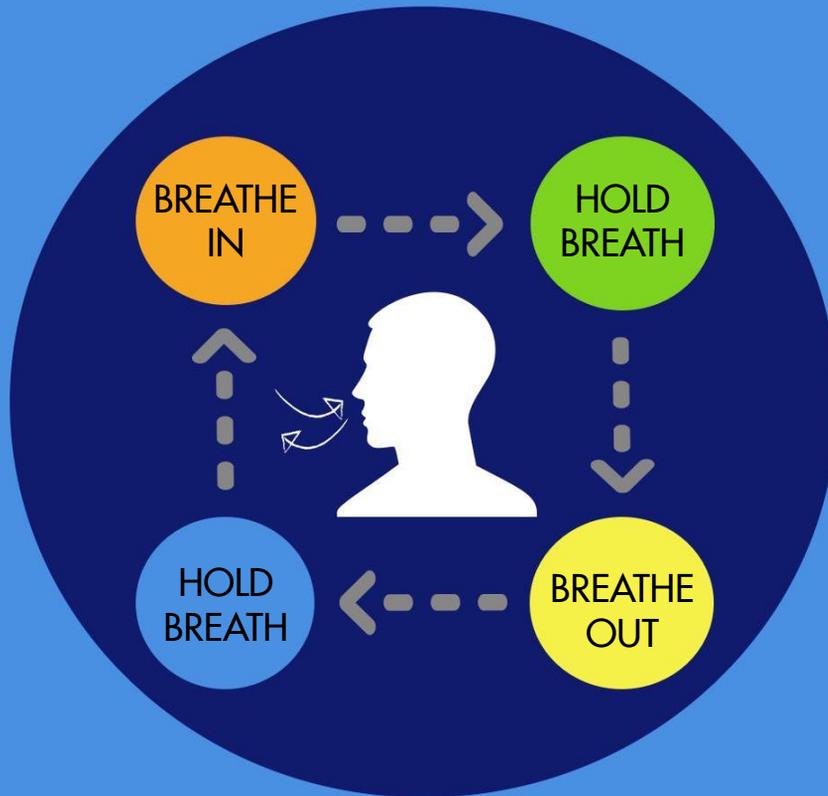
# EXERCISE BELLY BREATHING

Here is how to practice.

1. Sit with back straight or lie down.
2. Place one hand on your chest and another hand on the belly.
3. Breathe in deeply and slowly through your nose until your belly expands (You can check whether your belly expands or not by comparing the level of your hand on the chest and stomach).
4. Breathe out slowly through your mouth until your belly contracts.
5. Repeat breathing in and out 5-10 times.
6. Practice this exercise regularly.



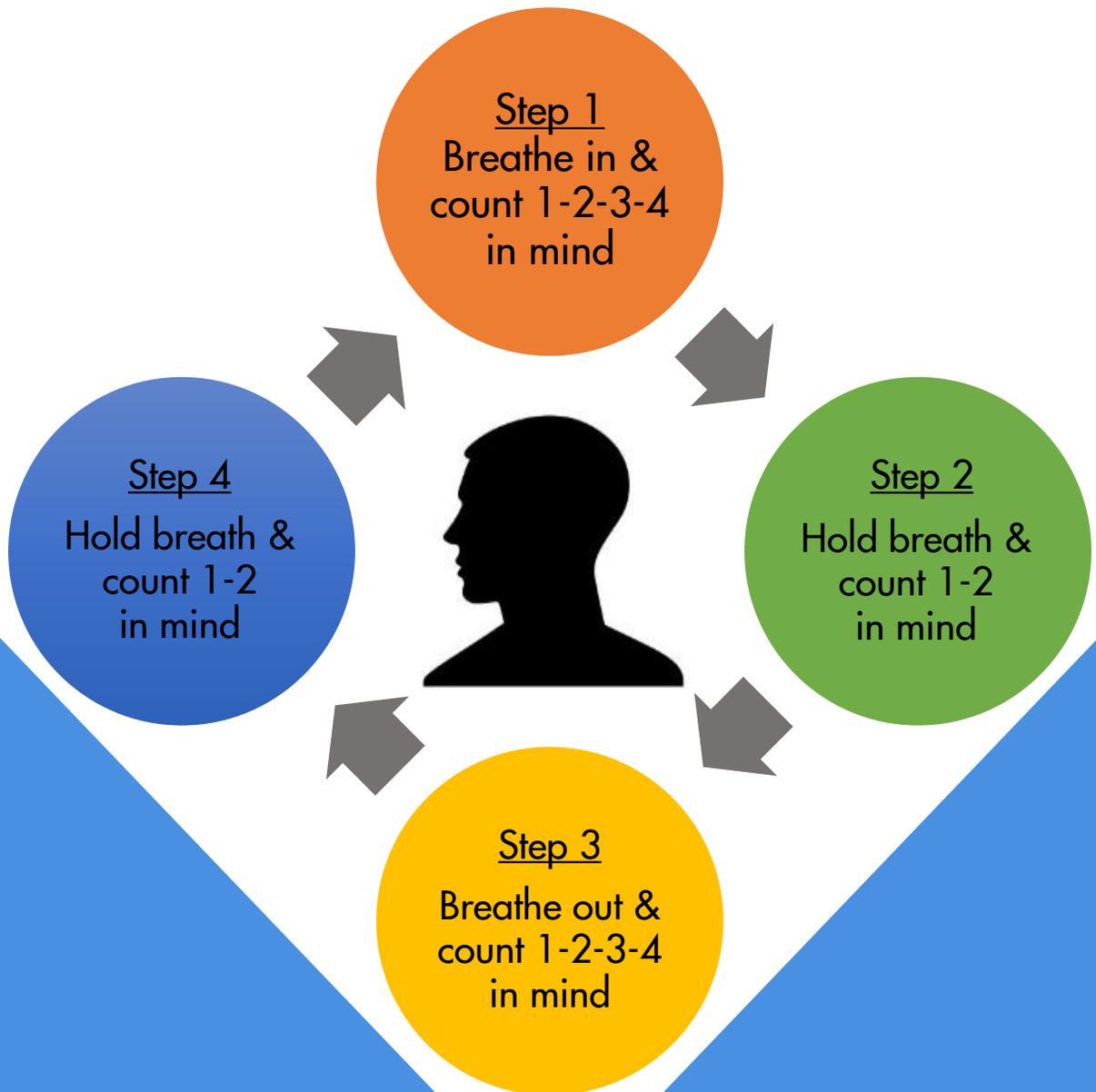
# SQUARE BREATHING



Square breathing is a practice that will help you decrease stress, calm yourself, regain self-control, and refocus your attention. In this technique you have to hold your breath for a few second when you breathe in and breathe out.

# EXERCISE SQUARE BREATHING

Follow the steps



Repeat all steps 2-3 times



# MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is a practice that focuses and notices what is happening to our body and mind at the present moment. Practicing mindfulness regularly will help to reduce stress, improve concentration, control anxiety, and increase self-awareness. The following page is a basic mindfulness exercise that you can practice by yourself.



# EXERCISE BASIC MINDFULNESS

1. Sit on a cushion or a floor or in a chair and keep your back straight.



2. Notice your breathing and focus on the sensation of air moving in and out of your nostrils.

3. When thoughts come into your mind and your mind starts wandering just notice your thoughts and return to focus on your breathing.



5 MINS/DAY

4. Try to practice basic mindfulness for at least 3-5 minutes a day.

# SUMMARY



We hope you enjoyed this book and that the exercises helped you cope with your stress better. If you feel your stress is getting hard to manage by yourself, please remember to talk to others about it. They may be able to help you or connect you to people who can support you.

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