

## Calm the Chaos Tools

### 1. If you do nothing else, do this: Take a breath.

Actually take 3 conscious breaths. This is a technique I have been teaching people for a long time and it really works. When you do it throughout the day, it changes the way you respond.

### 2. Name it to Tame it

When you are feeling anxious or stressed, try naming what you are feeling. This helps your nervous system to calm down. By saying out loud, or to yourself, the negative emotion you are feeling while you are experiencing it, you create a little distance between it and your reaction. It gives your rational thinking mind a chance to take over from the emotional part of your brain.

### 3. Use the STOP Technique

If you're feeling overwhelmed picture a stop sign in your mind and take a moment to pause and refocus. Stop what you are doing. Take a few breaths bringing your full attention to the natural cycle of your breathing. Observe. Ask yourself: What do I notice right now? First within your mind and body, and then outside of yourself to what is happening around you.

### 4. Do Nothing for a Moment

In high stress times our minds can become clogged with thoughts and it's hard to make sense of them. When you allow yourself to sit for a moment or two, it gives your thinking mind a rest, let's things settle a bit. Then you can return to your activities with a fresh perspective.

### 6. Five Finger Exercise

Another calming technique is to touch each finger to your thumb in order beginning with your index finger, middle finger, ring finger and then pinky. Imagine that you are rubbing your thumbprint onto the tip of each finger. Do one hand and then switch to the other hand.

### 7. Sensory Check-in

Do a quick check-in by naming one thing you are experiencing with each of your senses. Look around and name one thing you see. Take a deep breath and name one thing you smell. Close your eyes and name one thing you hear. Run your tongue around your teeth and swallow and name the taste in your mouth. Reach your hand out and touch something and name the texture that you feel.

### 8. Acknowledging your Emotions

You don't have to pretend that you aren't concerned. Go ahead and acknowledge what you are feeling. You are a human being after all and emotions are normal. When we acknowledge what we are feeling, we create an opportunity to move forward. Worry, which is a thinking activity, is sometimes a way to avoid what we are feeling. So begin by recognizing what emotions are present in the moment.

### 9. Let Thoughts Pass By

Worry is a cascading series of negative thoughts. We start with "what if this happens" and then add "and then what if that happens" and so on in a domino effect that often leads to the worst-case scenario. Hold on though: your thoughts are not facts or instructions. They are simply thoughts passing through your mind. You can choose to pay attention, or not, to any thoughts you have. Keep reminding yourself that thoughts are not facts.

### 10. Use the WAIT strategy

Here's a simple strategy that can help you shift from worrisome thoughts to more productive action. WAIT works like this: What am I thinking? Ask: Is this helpful? Identify something that would be more helpful. Try that thing.