

General Recovery & Stress Relief Tips:

- **Music** – incredibly important. Changes mood, vibration, can calm, heal and relax. Studies have shown that music literally changes the brain waves. Play music that makes you happy, calm, relaxed, and peaceful. Nothing too stimulating or mournful! Play it often, even all the time.
- **Nourishment** - eat vibrant, pranic food – preferably plant-based. Food changes your brain chemistry, and either supports or burdens the body. Of course enjoy some things you just love as a treat, but too much of some things can make us feel ill and not enjoy the moment. Hydrate well, do breathing exercises and gentle movement if possible. (If not, visualise the energy moving through the body and filling every cell, then visualise gentle movement) Support your body physically every step of the way.
- **Connection** - Spend time talking to/connecting with or just being with people you love and who make you happy, but ask for time alone when you need a break. One of the greatest pieces of advice a teacher gave me was “keep your love current”. Let those you love know you love them, don't leave it unsaid. This is on a daily basis, as we never know when our last time of seeing them is. (for anyone).

METHODS:

Ask what would make me happy in this moment? It could be a certain song, it could be peace and quiet, or it could be your hand held by someone you love. There are a million little things that elevate our energy/mind and heart... Do more of those. It's important to stop and ask, because when we start to feel unhappy, stressed, in despair – these things don't come naturally.

One of the main benefits of staying in an ashram is that your mind is directed towards something higher at every part of the day. This really changes how you feel in yourself. You can apply this principle at home too. Everything you do can direct your mind towards the state you want to experience, or feed the state you don't want. Actions, words, deeds, company, music, food, all of these can take you towards/away from the ideal state you want to be in.

First step is to decide what that is – how do I want to feel going through this experience? How do I want to feel on a day by day basis, moment by moment? Without denying anything, accepting that some aspects of this life experience are challenging and hard. When those difficult emotions rise, give them space. Breathe in and feel, breath out and let go.

- Name them... *“I'm feeling angry just now”*.
- Normalise them... *“This is a normal part of this experience”*.
- Learn from them, if appropriate... *“Is there anything to learn from this?”* For example – *“Am I angry because I'm not honouring my needs and asking for space when I need it?”*
- Continue the process of breathing in and feeling and breathing out letting go. Then return your mind to cultivating how you want to feel.

Now is all we ever have. Make it the best now possible, every moment, every breath.

BREATH MANTRAS:

I use a couple of breath mantras. Mantra means to “turn/condition the mind”. Repetition of

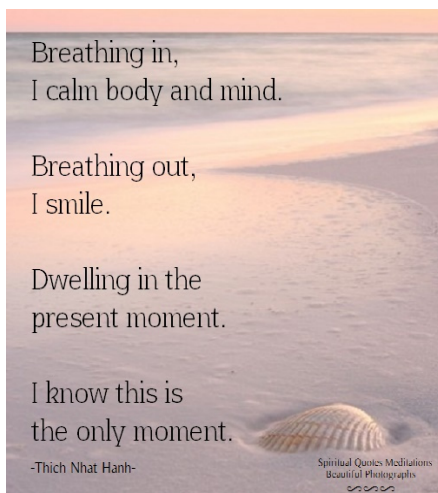
mantras gently turns/conditions the mind towards the state of being you wish to experience, (ultimately to the highest state of knowledge and being possible). Over time, the echo of the repetition continues to play in the background, so even if you are not consciously repeating the words, the energy of them can still be felt. I use them all the time, they are one of the most important tools I know. Perhaps even more important than meditation, although meditation is essential to give me the capacity to focus on the mantra.

When I need to calm myself:

- I inhale “slow” and Exhale “deep” (mentally) 3 times, then rest for a minute, then do another mantra of two words that represent what I need right now and repeat that 3 times. Examples; Calm/happy, peaceful/present, loving/loved, calm/centred, strong/peaceful, grateful/complete.

Often after repeating my mantras, it is natural to just simply stay in the state they bring about – i.e. you slip into a naturally meditative state. Rest in that state as long as you wish, or is natural. If you want to stay longer, you can repeat the mantras again when you find yourself starting to get distracted.

One of my teachers said we breathe around 21,000 times a day – so that is 21,000 opportunities to pray (or do a mantra). E.g. Inhale “I am” and exhale “grateful”. A popular sanskrit mantra is to inhale “So” and exhale “Ham” (meaning I am That = in the highest state of being possible – calm, loving, present, accepting, content, happy, Equanimeous – all encompassed in the word That).



VISUALISATION:

Visualisation is also an incredibly powerful tool – it is a meditative practice that you can use to live an alternate experience. There are any number of visualisations available, but you can also guide yourself.

Begin by relaxing, eyes closed, calm the breath. Visualise a transition – e.g. walking down some stairs to a beautiful room, or across a meadow to a beautiful forest glen, or along a cliff edge to a vantage point overlooking a beautiful beach – then see a door, a path or something that you can open and walk into another world – the one you want to experience. The possibilities are limitless then, see yourself in a beautiful environment, with people you love, feeling amazing, doing something joyful or just sitting and feeling. There are no limits – visualise with as much detail as

you can, the feeling of the air, the smells, the colours, the sounds... just enjoy experiencing this until you naturally feel ready to just rest and soak it all in... Then wander back up the stairs, across the meadow, back up the beach path to your current life, bringing with you the joy, the wonder, the energy, the love of your visualised experience. Rest as long as you like, then open your eyes.

Listen to talks, podcasts that are uplifting, bring you to a calm peaceful state, or give acceptance, love and hope.

Thich Naht Hahn

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7gmeZUphc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m5ucWKDYQMc>

UPLIFT has lots of amazing videos and articles on every topic and is free. Your focus doesn't have to be just on health, but anything inspiring.

<https://uplift.tv/>

<https://upliftconnect.com/channel/wellness/>

If you haven't found Ian Gawler yet, there's a lot of great stuff on his websites

<https://iangawler.com/>

<https://gawler.org>

PRACTICE:

- Create a simple morning ritual that sets you up for the day.
- First thing (after cleaning teeth etc. and hydrating), listen to a 5 minute meditation then listen to your absolute favourite song that makes you feel happy and joyful.
- This takes 8 minutes and if possible, **never miss it.**
- Then I can add yoga, pranayama, meditation, study as my morning allows.

Include meditation and breath-work if you can.

1 – Reclining on a bolster or blankets along/under your spine that lift your chest. Make sure your head is comfortably supported with another folded blanket as needed. Spend a few minutes just connecting with your breath. This position should make it easy for the diaphragm to relax and to access a full natural belly breath, and open up the chest for breath into the top of the lungs. Try to have a long, smooth breath filling up from the bottom of the belly breath to the top of the lungs (near collarbones), then empty from top of lungs to belly. If jagged, or stressful – shorten length of breath, or take a brief rest and begin again. Try to keep the inhale and exhale even length.

Counting can be useful.

2 – Gently roll to side and make your way to a seated position. Sitting up, do 3 breaths using the “slow/deep” mantra, OR 3 breaths breathing out twice as long as your inhale (e.g. if you breathe in for 4, breath out for 8). Pause and rest with natural breath.

3 – Nadi shodhana pranayama. Natural even length breaths. Using your ring and little finger on right hand (keep left hand relaxed on leg) block the left nostril and inhale through the right, change finger position blocking right nostril with thumb and opening left nostril exhale for the same length as inhale. Inhale through left, then change finger position again close left and exhale through right nostril. Simply put – in right, out left, in left, out right. This is one round. Do 3-6 rounds as able. This is particularly good for balancing and tonifying the nervous system, which has a beneficial

effect on calming the mind, and boosting the immune system.

4 – Sit and breathe evenly and naturally, and just enjoy the moment. You might want to include some breath mantras here. Then spend a little time after that simply sitting and being.

5 – When you feel the natural impulse to move, you can try a few simple practices.

- Simply raising your arms when you inhale, lowering them as you exhale. Gently twisting towards one side then another.
- Gentle arm and head movements (Pawanmuktanasana).
- Cross legs forward 5-15 breaths each side if accessible.
- Animal relaxation then Tiger and cat.
- **OR** some gentle pawanmuktanasana for legs and feet if less energy.

If the energy is there:

- Some standing squats, and gentle salutes.
- Perhaps tree pose, or a standing.
- 1-3 forward bends.
- 1-2 gentle twists
- (only about 10-15 minutes all up)

Then:

- Child pose for as long as you can comfortable stay.
- Come up to sitting and spend a few moments breathing, being, and contemplating the things you feel grateful for in this moment. Hands in prayer position if it feels natural. From simple things to this breath, to larger things, all the people and teachers in your life, the experiences you've had, fresh air, water, Nature, anything at all that lets you feel gratitude. Breathe it in. Place your hands on your heart and breathe in the loving energy.
- Take rest in Savasana for 10 minutes minimum.
- You can just relax, or listen to calming music, or listen to a Yoga Nidra – e.g. (Wailana (iTunes) or Philip Stevens – link included in email).

Specialised poses:

- To support liver after treatments or feeling unwell: Supta baddha konasana (lying back flat on the ground or on spinal roll or bolster, soles of feet together). Can also help some headaches, or any heat condition.
- To build up some energy and support kidneys: Legs up the wall.
- To calm emotions: Setu bandhasana (make a bench of 4 blankets, lying back on it with shoulders on the floor and strap around calf). Can be used instead of Savasana, or anytime, 10-20 minutes.
- Back pain: Child pose, or legs up wall.
- Nausea: Seated virasana (sitting/kneeling with heels beside hips, on a blanket/bolster as high as you can to be comfortable) for about 10 minutes. Try to breathe calmly and relax or meditate. Massage around knees when you come out.

Include as needed, or can be done anytime (except don't do child or legs up wall straight after a meal, put spinal roll or bolster under spine for Supta BK if just eaten).

FURTHER BREATH EXERCISES:

Here are another few simple breath exercises that can be very helpful. I recommend choosing one per week. Prepare your seat, connect to belly breath, then do one of these 3 breath exercises. All of these breaths naturally lead to a meditative state, so just sitting in a relaxed position and absorbing how you feel for a few minutes will naturally lead you into your Meditation practice.

1 - Connect to your belly breath and observe as it moves up into your heart/chest pause, then observe as it slowly flows out again. Once connected, count your inhale. Whatever the count of the inhale, double it for the exhale.

E.g. if your inhale is 5, exhale 10, inhale is 6 – exhale 12 etc. Do 3 breaths. This connects you to your belly breath, activates the parasympathetic nervous system, helps anchor you into your body and be present to what is, to Now.

2 – Inhale mentally repeat the word “slow” exhale mentally repeat the word “deep”. Repeat 3 times. Then change the words to words that are appropriate for what you are wanting to feel/cultivate – e.g. Inhale “CALM” exhale “STRONG”/ inhale CLEAR exhale LOVING/ inhale “STEADY” exhale “CONFIDENT”. Repeat 3 times. You can repeat with a second or third pair of qualities if you wish – they will build/accumulate in your system. Another simple and very effective Mantra you can add or do instead of the word pairs is: Inhale and mentally repeat “I am”, Exhale and mentally repeat “peace”.

3 – Inhale slowly and consciously, at the top of the inhale – pause. Wait for the inhale to naturally roll over into the exhale. At the bottom of the exhale – pause. Wait for the inhale to naturally begin. After 2 or 3 breaths, you should feel comfortable finding the pause and the natural impulse of the breath. Then for the next 3 breaths – rest in the pause a little longer. Suspended in time/space/ between the inhale and exhale = between the opposites, fully present – this is very calming, replenishing and clarifying.

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