

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the Wellness Toolkit! It is our hope that through the following exercises, we can provide you with some tools to cultivate a healthier, more mindful approach to your wellbeing. As you already know, residency is a challenging process. The years spent during training may be some of the most exciting and rewarding, but also difficult in your medical career. Residents are faced with a steep learning curve, difficult decisions, and long hours. Finding the balance between education and patient care responsibilities, along with building one's personal and family life, can be a great challenge.

A recent ACGME survey found that most residents classified themselves as "healthy," but when broken down by individual lifestyle factors (including sleep, energy levels, and depression), residents scored lower than their non-resident peers. Additional studies have recently shown burnout levels among residents inflating. The discrepancy between resident perceptions and reality underscores the significance of promoting wellbeing during residency. Most studies have focused on burnout, rather than wellbeing interventions during residency. However, there is clear evidence that retraining our brains (default mode network and emotion regulation) by practicing gratitude and cultivating optimism, as well as using voluntary breathing exercises to modulate our stress response, has positive benefits.

We want to thank you, our Wellness Champions, for volunteering your time during the next twelve weeks to guide your peers through the following step by step guides to increase resident wellbeing. It is our hope that by practicing these exercises, for the next twelve weeks and beyond, that you will notice how your coping style have changed and how you can serve your patients and yourself better. We hope to provide you with resources to keep you mentally fit, happy and well-rounded in the busy world of medicine!

Thank you!



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¹ Image retrieved from: <https://pixabay.com/en/apple-diet-female-food-fresh-2391/> on July 9, 2017. Creative Commons License associated: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>

Hello all,

In the weekly 15 minute sessions, you will lead your groups in practicing the exercises discussed in the didactic intervention. In this handbook we will describe these exercises step by step to make it easy for you to do. There is a variety of exercises for each positive emotion (some you have already done in the didactic session, some are new). The goal is to introduce you all to a variety so that each person can pick ones that suit them the best to practice independently.

Below we have outlined two to three exercises to lead each week during the twelve-week curriculum, for a total of fifteen minutes each week. If you or your group wishes to practice an exercise not listed for the particular week, please do not hesitate to incorporate it in addition to those recommended above. Certain exercises may require specific videos as a guide, which will be provided to you. If you have any questions or require clarification on any exercises, do not hesitate to reach out to us. Finally, if you have resources with additional wellbeing exercises, please share them with us to incorporate into this toolkit.

Good luck!

Glossary

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Recommended Weekly Schedule

Our Schedule!

Week	Breathing Exercise	Gratitude	Social Connection	Optimism
1	Diaphragmatic (2 min)	5 Good Things	Things in Common	
2	Diaphragmatic (3 min)	Levels of Gratitude		Reframing #1
3	Slow Deep (3 min)	Levels of Gratitude		Reframing #2
4	Slow Deep (2 min)	I'm Thankful for the People in my Life		Reframing #2
5	Diaphragmatic (4 min)	I'm Thankful for the People in my Life		Reframing #1
6	Diaphragmatic (2 min)	5 Good Things		Best Possible Future Self
7		Levels of Gratitude	Positive Reflection	Best Possible Future Self
8	Slow Deep (3 min)	Levels of Gratitude		Best Possible Future Self
9	Diaphragmatic (5 min)	5 Good Things	Things in Common	
10	Slow Deep (3 min)	Levels of Gratitude		Reframing #1
11	Alternate Nostril	I'm Thankful for the People in my Life		Reframing #2
12	Diaphragmatic (2 min)	Email/Letter		Best Possible Future Self

** If you or your group wishes to practice an exercise not listed for the particular week, please do not hesitate to incorporate it in addition to those recommended above. At the end of the 12 weeks, you can restart the cycle or use a combination your group likes.

**Please note all breathing exercises can be done for variable durations. The weekly schedule has a suggestion on the time for these exercises each week. Please let your group know the time before beginning the exercise.

5 Good Things

Time Required: 2 minutes

Think about the positive things in your life. Make a list of all the things that went well for you in the past 24 hours. The items can be relatively small in importance (e.g., “I slept well”) or relatively large (e.g., “I kept my sick patient alive today”). If you are stuck and cannot think of anything that went well, consider the following questions:

1. What touched me today?

[eg., my patient said ‘thank you,’ I got a hug from the mother of my patient, I could make time to spend with my significant other]

2. Who or what inspired me today?

[eg., my attending said I gave a stellar presentation, one of my co-residents volunteered at a local shelter, my team won a big game]

3. What made me smile today?

[eg., my co-residents made time to have lunch with me today, I discharged a tough patient, I made it to work on time]

If you find yourself focusing on negative feelings, refocus your mind on the good event and the positive feelings that came with it. This can take effort but gets easier with practice and can make a real difference in how you feel.

To make this exercise part of your daily routine, consider writing down and sharing the things that went well for you at the end of the day and sharing them. ²



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² Emmons, Robert. “Why Gratitude is Good.” Greater Good: The Science of a Meaningful Life. University of California, Berkeley. November 16, 2010. <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/why_gratitude_is_good>

³ Image retrieved from: <https://pixabay.com/en/santa-claus-wish-list-write-down-514186/> on July 9, 2017. Creative Commons License associated: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>

Levels of Gratitude (Appendix D)

Time Required: 4 minutes

There are many levels and types of gratitude:

1. Thanksgiving Gratitude: This is the first level, and begins with asking yourself ‘what am I grateful for?’ on Thanksgiving.

Think about some things you are grateful for. It may be as simple as the food you eat, the house we live in or the clothing we wear. You might be grateful for the ability to help care for and heal others, or to have a loved one in your life. By practicing the “5 Good Things” exercise, we hope this type of gratitude will become easy for you. Please write these down.

2. Awe Gratitude: The second level of gratitude is when you can open to the mystery of the universe. Have you ever experienced a sunrise so beautiful that you were overcome with gratitude to just witness to it? When you can allow the palpable, warm, flowing gush of joy that such beauty exists in this world wash over you—that is when you have experienced the second level of gratitude.

Think about an awe-inspiring moment you have seen. Have you worked so hard with a patient who was once told they would never walk again, just to set their feet flat on the floor and stand upright? Please write these down.

3. Adversity Gratitude: Finally, this level asks that you can look within yourself to see what you have learned from in your past. This means that you can look back and feel grateful for both the ‘good’ things and the ‘bad’ things that have happened in your life. It asks if you could take what you thought was a challenge or a tragedy and grow from that experience.

Think about a time in your life when you were sure the experience would be bad. Were you dreading walking in to the anatomy lab during medical school? How did that experience change you? Are you a gifted surgeon now, adept at using your hands to heal? Please write these down.⁴

⁴ Wood AM, Froh JJ, Geraghty AW. Gratitude and well-being: a review and theoretical integration. Clin Psychol Rev. 2010 Nov;30(7):890-905.

I'm Thankful for the People in my Life

Time Required: 5 minutes

Close your eyes. Sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor and your spine upright. Bring your awareness inward. Without straining or concentrating, relax and gently follow the instructions. Take a deep breath in and breathe out.

Think of a person close to you who you are grateful to. It could be someone from the past or the present; someone still in your life or who has passed. Imagine that person standing on your right side. Think about their smile, how the corners of their lips move upward. Imagine the color of that person's eyes and how the light twinkles when they smile. How does this person smell? What are they wearing? Send love and gratitude that you feel to that person.

Now bring to mind another person who you cherish deeply. Imagine that person standing on your left side. Think about the color of that person's hair, is it long or short? Does this person have freckles? Does she wear lipstick? Does he wear cologne? What is their favorite color? Direct the love within you to that person. Send all your love and thanks to that person.

Now imagine yourself as a child. A smaller version of yourself doing your favorite activity. Was it playing baseball with your dad? Coloring at recess? Collecting Legos? Send your younger self love and acceptance. Be grateful for the adult this little person has become.

Now think of someone who has been difficult in your life, someone who has made you jump through hoops or placed objects in your way toward a goal. You and this person are alike in your wish to be happy. Send all your wishes for well-being to that person, wish them well and send them love anyway.

Take a deep breath in. And breathe out. And another deep breath in and let it go. Notice the state of your mind and how you feel after this. When you're ready, you may open your eyes.⁵

⁵ Seppala, E.M., Hutcherson, C. A., Nguyen, D. T. H., Doty, J.R., & Gross, J.J. (2014) Loving-kindness meditation: A tool to improve healthcare provider compassion, resilience, and patient care. *Journal of Compassionate Healthcare*. Doi:10.1186/s40639-014-0005-9

Email/Letter

Time Required: 5 minutes

Call to mind someone who did something for you for which you are extremely grateful, but to whom you never expressed your gratitude; this could be a relative, friend, teacher, or colleague. The goal of this exercise is to remember a good event, experience, person, or thing in your life—then enjoy the good emotions that come with it. Try to choose someone who is alive and accessible to you, as you will be writing an email/letter to them using the following steps.

1. Write as though you are addressing this person directly [Dear _____]
2. Describe in specific terms what this person did, why you are grateful to this person, and how this person's actions affected your life
3. Go for depth over breadth—elaborating in detail about a particular person or thing for which you're grateful carries more benefits than a superficial list of many things
4. Describe what you are doing in your life now and how you often remember his or her efforts

Next, you should try, if possible, to deliver your letter via email or in person. If you can email the letter, follow-up with this person, paying attention to his or her reaction as well as your own. If you can deliver it in person, spend time with the recipient and share how their action made you feel. ⁶⁷



⁶ "Gratitude Letter." Greater Good in Action: Science-Based Practices for a Meaningful Life. University of California, Berkeley. 2017. <https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/gratitude_letter#data-tab-how>

⁷ Seligman, M. E., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). "Positive psychology progress: empirical validation of interventions." *American Psychologist*, 60(5), 410.

⁸ Image retrieved from: <https://pixabay.com/en/email-marketing-online-marketing-2362038/> on July 9, 2017. Creative Commons License associated: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>

Things in Common

Time Required: 5 minutes

The way in which we connect with other people helps mold the way in which we think about ourselves. When we meet new people, our default mode is to look for the differences. Looking for the differences has become commonplace, even manifesting in children's games—which one of these is not like the rest? Our social connectedness, however, can strengthen our happiness. In this exercise, you will work on connecting with someone you may not know so well. Since you probably sat down next to your best friend or your co-resident on service, stand up. Move around the room. Settle back down next to someone who you might not know very well.

Spend the next 5 minutes talking to this person to discover some things that you have in common. There are obvious similarities which don't even have to be spoken, for example, we are both residents in our subspecialty, we are both males, we both have brown hair and brown eyes, etc. Try to skip over those superficial things you have in common. Take some time to find out if you have been in similar places, enjoy the same hobbies, have the same career goals, etc.

Consider sharing your similarities with the group so that they may feel more connected to you as well, or so that you can help foster a new friendship founded on the qualities and experiences you just discovered.⁹¹⁰¹¹

⁹ "Shared Identity." Greater Good in Action: Science-Based Practices for a Meaningful Life. University of California, Berkeley. 2017. <https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/shared_identity>

¹⁰ Levine, M., Prosser, A., Evans, D., & Reicher, S. (2005). "Identity and emergency intervention: How social group membership and inclusiveness of group boundaries shape helping behavior." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 31(4), 443-453.

¹¹ Leary, M. R., Tipsord, J. M., & Tate, E. B. (2008). "Allo-inclusive identity: Incorporating the social and natural worlds into one's sense of self." In H. A. Wayment & J. J. Bauer (Eds.). *Transcending self-interest: Psychological explorations of the quiet ego* (pp. 137-147). Washington: APA.

Positive Reflection

Time Required: 4 minutes

Do you interrupt people or constantly think of how you can share a story of your own while they are talking? The answer is probably yes. One thing that can happen in our eagerness to relate, please, entertain, and share, is that we remove ourselves from the present situation and with that, our ability to be sensitive and engaged listeners.

Divide up in pairs. In this exercise, you will share with the person sitting to your left, the most positive memory you can think of. Spend the next 2 minutes talking to this person about the best thing you have ever done or accomplished. Try to make it something unique to you!

As the listener, avoid judgement or jealousy. Your goal is to understand the other person's story and perspective and accept it for what it is. Be happy for the person you are listening to. Try not to interrupt with counter-arguments or mentally prepare a story in which you did something bigger or better while the other person is speaking.

Repeat the exercise by changing partners. This time the person who listened first will be sharing their own positive memory with the person on their right.¹²¹³



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¹² Sergeant, S., & Mongrain, M. (2014). An online optimism intervention reduces depression in pessimistic individuals. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 82*(2), 263-274.

¹³ Caprara, G. V., Steca, P., Gerbino, M., Paciello, M., & Vecchio, G. M. (2006). Looking for adolescents' well-being: Self-efficacy beliefs as determinants of positive thinking and happiness. *Epidemiologia e Psichiatria Sociale, 15*(01), 30-43.

¹⁴ Image retrieved from: <https://pixabay.com/en/people-kids-children-group-2129933/> on July 9, 2017. Creative Commons License associated: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>

Reframing #1 (Self)

Time Required: 4 minutes

Reframing can be focused on your inner thoughts or actions toward yourself, or towards others.

Think about times when you feel bad about yourself or are struggling (eg., I spent more time than usual with a patient who started telling me about a recent loss, and now I feel rushed. “I am an idiot; my whole schedule is thrown off now.”). How do you typically respond to yourself in these situations? Can you change the way you think about yourself in these situations?

You can reframe your thoughts using a few tactics. Here are a few examples illustrating how to reframe a negative thought:

1. **Gratitude:** I learned how to speak with patients more compassionately. I am thankful that this patient taught me that I need to learn how to manage my time better.
2. **Compassion:** She is suffering so much, at least I only have to deal with a busy day.
3. **Acceptance:** 1 out of 5 patients will make me go off schedule at least a little.
4. **Meaning:** I am becoming the kind of doctor I want to be even though I am running late. I am learning to manage patients well so that I am on my way to becoming the best doctor I can.

Have you ever caught yourself using the adage “a monkey could do this”? Instead of discounting the positive things you can do, or minimizing the significance of your accomplishments, instead be **compassionate** toward yourself and say: “I am very good at what I do. I am impressive and many other people want to learn from me.” Can you reframe this situation with gratitude or acceptance?

“It’s all my fault!” Many times, we catch ourselves taking all the blame for something that went wrong. While you should take responsibility for yourself and your actions, you don’t need to accept the blame for things that are not your fault. Chances are some factors were beyond your control. Use **acceptance** to tell yourself instead: “I accept responsibility for my part of the problem, but there were things beyond my control. I cannot blame myself for everything that went wrong.”

Have you ever had a fun night staying in your apartment, but felt like you missed out the next day when you heard about something cool your friends had done? We tend to beat ourselves up in these kinds of situations, even though we had a good time! Rather than let your mind be filled with negative thoughts, allow yourself to feel inner **gratitude** for a relaxing night where you could enjoy time alone or with family.

The next time you find yourself being particularly negative, think about using gratitude, compassion, acceptance, and finding alternate meaning to reframe the situation into a more positive one. ¹⁵

¹⁵ Mikey D. “A Practical Guide to Reframing Your Thoughts And Making Yourself Happier” Feel Happiness. October 18, 2012. <<http://feelhappiness.com/reframing-your-thoughts-make-yourself-happier/>>

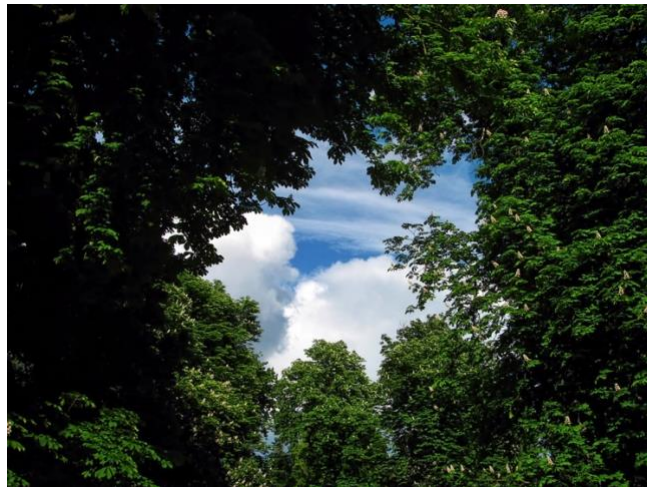
Reframing #2 (Others)

Time Required: 4 minutes

We usually judge ourselves based on our intentions to perform actions and the outcomes of those actions. We judge others, though, by their actions alone. We often jump to assumptions regarding the intention behind their actions. For example, someone cuts you off while driving to take the exit ahead of you. You will probably curse at them and become frustrated because now you are going to be late. Instead of becoming angry, frustrated, or mad, try to reframe this situation using the following:

- 1. Gratitude:** Thank goodness I am not in the car with someone who drives like that! Or, I am glad that I left early enough that I won't be late anyway.
- 2. Compassion:** Give this person the benefit of the doubt. Maybe there is a passenger who is sick and needs to get to the hospital, or maybe the driver is even more late than you! You can use a generic thought: "I know this person is loved by someone;" "I know this person has their own problems;" "I wish him/her well."
- 3. Acceptance:** This person is a crazy driver, but I saw them coming and could move out of the way so no one got hurt.
- 4. Meaning:** I am glad I am working on my well-being and thinking kinder thoughts towards others.

The next time you find yourself thinking negatively toward someone else, think about using gratitude, compassion, acceptance, and finding alternate meaning to reframe the situation into a more positive one. ¹⁶



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¹⁶ Mikey D. "A Practical Guide to Reframing Your Thoughts And Making Yourself Happier" Feel Happiness. October 18, 2012. <<http://feelhappiness.com/reframing-your-thoughts-make-yourself-happier/>>

¹⁷ Image retrieved from: <https://pixabay.com/en/tree-trees-park-sky-heaven-window-220664/> on July 9, 2017. Creative Commons License associated: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>

Best Possible Future Self (Appendix E)

Time Required: 4 minutes

Take a moment to imagine your life in the future. What is the best possible life you can imagine? Consider all the relevant areas of your life, such as your day tomorrow, your career, relationships, hobbies, and/or health. What would happen in these areas of your life in your best possible future? Pick one area to focus on.

Think about, and consider writing down, what you imagine this specific best possible future to be. You can focus on the immediate future or the long-term. Try to be very specific. Speak about yourself as though you are giving instructions. Use the instructions below to help guide you through this process.

If you focus on tomorrow, can you imagine a day in which you feel efficient? In control? How would you do this? Does it mean starting the day 30 minutes early? Or writing your notes at the bedside of each patient you see?

If you are focusing on your career, do you see yourself as a world-class surgeon working at a world-renowned hospital? Do you see yourself in the lab researching cutting-edge cancer curing technology? How will you get there? What journal will you publish in? What steps did you take? Who did you look up to for mentorship?

The more specific you are, the more engaged you will be in the exercise and the more you'll get out of it. Be as creative and imaginative as you want. Remember you can pick a quality you are working on and use it as a positive affirmation exercise to provide direction to your default mode network.¹⁸¹⁹

“If your mind can conceive it; and your heart can believe it – then you can achieve it.”

--Muhammad Ali

¹⁸ “Best Possible Self.” Greater Good in Action: Science-Based Practices for a Meaningful Life. University of California, Berkeley. 2017. <https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/best_possible_self>

¹⁹ Sheldon, K. M., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2006). “How to increase and sustain positive emotion: The effects of expressing gratitude and visualizing best possible selves.” *Journal of Positive Psychology*, 1(2), 73-82.

Diaphragmatic Breathing (Appendix F)

Time Required: 2-5 minutes

Find a comfortable place where you can sit easily with minimal disturbance. Arrange what is around you so that you are reminded you are in a peaceful space. Find a seat where you can easily be upright without forcing your body in to an unnatural posture. Let your body be firmly planted to the earth or seat, your hands resting easily, your heart soft, your eyes gently closed. Bring attention to the sensations of your breathing. Take a few deep breaths in through the nose and out through the nose to sense where you can feel the breath most easily, where you can feel the movement of the chest or rise and fall of the belly.

Place one hand over your heart and one hand on the abdomen. Breathe in slowly through your nose so that your stomach moves out against your hand. The hand over your heart should remain as still as possible. Breathe out slowly, feeling the muscles of the abdominal wall tighten, letting them contract inward and upward toward the spine. The hand over your heart should still remain as still as possible. Count your breaths from 1-10. Repeat this cycle for a total of 10 breaths; ten inhalations and ten exhalations.

After a few breaths, your mind will probably start to wander. When you notice this, no matter how long or short a time you have been away, simply come back to the sensation of the next breath and start again from one. As you sit, let this slow rhythm of your breath activate the parasympathetic nervous system to slow down your heart beat and soothe your racing mind.²⁰

²⁰ Jerath R, Edry JW, Barnes VA, Jerath V (2006) Physiology of long pranayamic breathing: neural respiratory elements may provide a mechanism that explains how slow deep breathing shifts the autonomic nervous system. *Med Hypotheses* 67:566–571.



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Slow Deep Breathing (Appendix G)

Time Required: 2-5 minutes

In medical school we are typically taught there are two phases to the breath, the inhale and the exhale. Actually, there are four parts: inhalation, the space of breath retention at the top of the inhale, exhalation, and the space of breath retention at the bottom of the exhale. Normally these pauses are barely noticeable, but if you can extend them, you can work to quiet the chatter in the mind and improve concentration.

Settle in to a comfortable seat. If you are in a chair, lift the spine tall and plant your feet on the floor. If you are sitting with legs crossed, avoid rounding in the back and collapsing through the ribs. Without sticking the ribs out, feel expansive through the lungs. Inhale deeply through the nose, exhale fully through the nose. Inhale deeply through the nose for a count of four (1...2...3...4) until the lungs are full. Hold at the top of the inhale for a count of four (1...2...3...4), keeping the lips sealed. Exhale evenly through the nose for a steady count of six (1...2...3...4...5...6) until the lungs are completely empty. When the lungs are empty, hold here for a count of two (1...2). Repeat this series four times. If the length of the in breath or breath retention become uncomfortable, change them to a count of three.

Inhale through the nose for four (1...2...3...4), hold for four (1...2...3...4). Exhale through the nose for six (1...2...3...4...5...6) and hold out for two (1...2).

Inhale through the nose for four (1...2...3...4), hold for four (1...2...3...4). Exhale through the nose for six (1...2...3...4...5...6) and hold out for two (1...2).

Inhale through the nose for four (1...2...3...4), hold for four (1...2...3...4). Exhale through the nose for six (1...2...3...4...5...6) and hold out for two (1...2).

²¹ Image retrieved from <https://pixabay.com/en/soap-bubble-breath-bubble-1101630/> on July 9, 2017. Creative Commons License associated: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>

Return to your regular breath and notice any shifts in your thoughts. Do you feel more focused? Is your heart beating slower now that you have activated the parasympathetic nervous system with this slow, deep breathing?²²

Alternate Nostril Breathing (Appendix H)

Time Required: 2-5 minutes

Find a comfortable seat, whether on a chair with your feet firmly rooted to the earth, or with legs crossed and spine upright. Do not force your body in to an unnatural posture, but imagine the spine lengthening down through the tailbone and up through the crown. Rest your hands easily and close your eyes gently. If you feel any sinus pressure or congestion, make sure to blow your nose well before beginning this exercise.

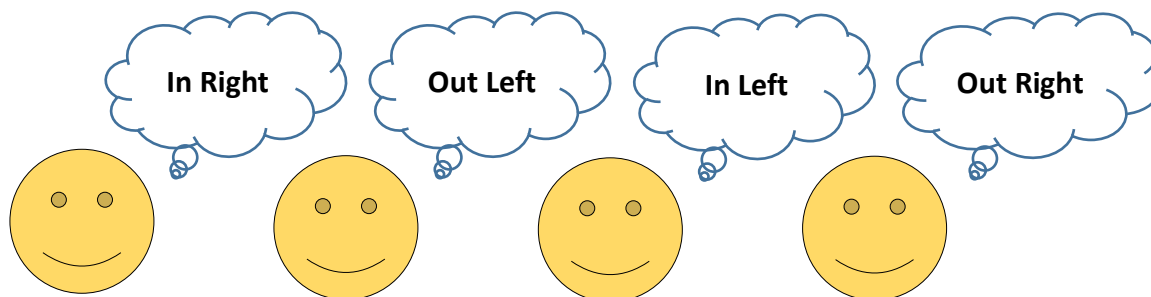
Bring your right hand in front of your face, palm facing your nose. Take a deep breath in through the nose; exhale fully through the nose. With the right hand, bring your thumb to close the right nostril. Inhale slowly and steadily through the left nostril. At the top of the inhale, close the left nostril with the ring finger. Release the thumb from the right nostril and exhale slowly through the right nostril only. Keeping the fingers where they are, inhale through the right nostril. Close off the right nostril with the right thumb and release the ring finger from the left nostril, exhale through the left nostril.

Inhale through the left. Close the left nostril with the ring finger, release the thumb. Exhale through the right. Inhale through the right. Close the right nostril with the thumb, release the ring finger. Exhale through the left.

Repeat this exercise in your own time for a total of 7 cycles, trying to match the length of the inhale with the length of the exhale. End with an exhale on the left. Alternate nostril breathing is a very cleansing breath meant to quiet the chatter of the mind. By closing off each nostril in succession, you are activating alternate hemispheres of the brain to bring them in balance. Inhale deeply and fully through both nostrils. Exhale everything out.²³

²² Protin, Corey and Kakoyiannis, Alana. "Here's the breathing technique that soldiers use to stay calm in the field." Business Insider. October 21, 2016. <<http://www.businessinsider.com/soldiers-breathing-technique-stay-calm-2016-10>>

²³ Ghiya, Shreya and Lee, C Matthew. "Influence of alternate nostril breathing on heart rate variability in non-practitioners of yogic breathing." *Int J Yoga*. 2012 Jan-Jun; 5(1): 66–69. doi: 10.4103/0973-6131.91717



Balanced Breathing (Appendix I)

Time Required: 2-5 minutes

Sit upright, feet firmly planted to the earth, or sit comfortably with legs crossed. Lengthen through the spine to draw the tailbone down and the crown up. Hug the ribs in so the spine is straight. Notice the breath. Does it feel warm or cool through the nose? Is it long or short? Shallow or deep? Take note of these qualities without altering the breath. Notice if the inhale is shorter than the exhale. If it is, can you lengthen it? While you breathe in, quietly tell yourself "I am breathing in." While you are breathing out, repeat in your mind "I am breathing out."

On your next breath in, begin to lengthen it to match the exhale. Breathe in for a count of four (1...2...3...4) and breathe out for a count of four (1...2...3...4). If this feels very comfortable, lengthen the inhale to match the exhale, increasing your count to 5. Inhale 1...2...3...4...5 and exhale for 1...2...3...4...5. Continue to increase the length of each breath in your own time to 6, 7, or even 8, but do not stretch the breath past the point of feeling comfortable. Once you have taken 10 long, deep inhales and exhales, return to your normal breathing.

How does your body feel? Does the breath feel warmer? Louder? Longer? Is your heart beating slower? Are your eyes more relaxed? Is your spine still straight? ²⁴

²⁴ Patricia L. Gerbarg, MD and Richard P. Brown, MD. Neurobiology and Neurophysiology of Breath Practices in Psychiatric Care. November 30, 2016, Psychiatric Times

Energizing Breath (Appendix J)

Time Required: 2 minutes

This breathing exercise is meant to warm you up when you are feeling cold, wake you up when you are feeling tired (but still need to get work done) and release negative emotions. It consists of a series of forceful exhalations followed by passive inhalation. It is important to remember that this exercise should not be practiced if you are pregnant. If you feel any sinus pressure or congestion, make sure to blow your nose well before beginning.

Sit comfortably with legs crossed and spine upright, or if you are in a chair, plant the soles of your feet to the earth. Rest your hands comfortably, one on top of the other, on the low belly. Keep in mind that you can practice this at a slow pace to start and build up speed over time if you feel comfortable.

Take a deep breath in through your nose to feel your lungs and rib cage expand fully. Exhale through your mouth. Inhale again deeply through the nose, feeling the belly become round with air. Quickly, forcefully expel all the air from the abdomen through your nose, drawing the navel in and up toward the spine, feeling the belly draw in toward your hands. The primary movement you should feel is from the diaphragm. Allow the lungs to expand passively, without exerting effort. As you start to build up speed, this exercise feels close to a dog's panting. Repeat the cycle for 30 seconds, ending on an exhale.

Allow your breath to return to normal for 30 seconds. Observe the sensations and change in energy within your body. Repeat the cycle again of rapid, forceful exhalations and passive inhalations for 30 seconds, then rest for 30 seconds. Repeat once more.²⁵

²⁵ "Kapalbhati Pranayama." Yogawiz. 2016. <<http://www.yogawiz.com/pranayama/kapalbhati.html>>



Hello again,

This marks the conclusion of your twelve-week study period with us. We hope that we have convinced you that practicing gratitude, optimism, social connectedness and breathing exercises increase your happiness and wellbeing. It is our goal that through this Toolkit, we have provided you with enough resources to continue practicing independently. We invite you to start the recommended cycle of exercises again, or feel free to use a combination of the above exercises as you like or your group prefers. The goal is to have these wellness sessions continue for all individuals and programs. If you have wellness champions who are graduating, ask for volunteers to take their place.

²⁶ Image retrieved from: <https://pixabay.com/en/cheerful-idea-light-bulb-1296660/> on July 9, 2017. Creative Commons License associated: <https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/deed.en>