

# Steps to Stress Reduction

## Step 1: Awareness

What are the **SOURCES** of stress in my life?

How does stress **AFFECT** my body, mind, feelings, behaviors, and relationships?

Do these stressors and symptoms create a negative stress **CYCLE**?

What positive coping strategies do I **ALREADY** use to deal with stress?

## Step 4: Change Responses

**STOP** ➔ **BREATHE** ➔ **REFLECT** ➔ **CHOOSE**

**NOTICE** you are feeling stressed.

**STEP BACK** to reflect on the situation.

Take a Moment to **BREATHE** and **RELAX**.



**UNDERSTAND** what is happening in the **PRESENT** moment:  
What about the situation is stressful?  
What are my thoughts and feelings?  
Am I exaggerating or personalizing?  
What does the situation require of me?  
Are my expectations realistic?

**CHOOSE** the most **EFFECTIVE** response.

What are my options?

What will be the consequences of my actions?

What can I control?

What can I not control?

Do I need to walk away and calm down?

Is there anyone I can go to for help?

## Step 2: Breathe & Relax

Find a quiet place without distractions and close your eyes

Sit in a comfortable position with your hands lightly on your abdomen

Inhale and exhale normally a few times and observe your breathing

Take a slow deep breath in through your nose and feel your hand on your abdomen rise

Exhale through your mouth (or your nose if that feels more comfortable)

As you exhale, feel your abdomen fall

Continue to breathe slowly and deeply for 10 minutes or longer

As intrusive thoughts enter your mind, gently turn your attention back to your breath

## Step 5: Take a Mindful Minute

Close your eyes, sit quietly and...

**BREATHE:** Take deep breaths and let them out slowly. Think about how the air goes in and out of your lungs

**LISTEN:** Listen to the sounds around you and think about how many sounds you can name.

**SEE:** Look at one item around you; and think about its shape, color, texture, and how it is made.

**TOUCH:** Use your fingertips to feel an item or the area around you. Think about how it feels and the words you would use to describe it.

## Step 3: Self Care & Support

Make sure you get enough:

Sleep

Healthy food

Exercise

Fun

Support



## Step 6: Stick with What Works

**BE PATIENT**

Habits take time and effort to change.

**SEEK YOUR PEACE**

Try different techniques and routines until you find what works for you.

**KEEP IT SIMPLE**

Don't try to make too many changes at once. Set realistic goals.

**RECOGNIZE SUCCESS**

Every healthy choice we make is a success!

**TAKE IT ONE DAY AT A TIME**

Don't get discouraged. Every day offers new opportunities to reduce stress

**BRIGHAM HEALTH**



**BRIGHAM AND  
WOMEN'S HOSPITAL**

**Cardiac Rehabilitation Foxborough**

*\*Content in this handout is based on materials from the Benson Henry Institute for Mind-Body Medicine at MGH*