

The S.T.O.P Practice for Stress — from Elisha Goldstein



Creating space in the day to stop, come down from the worried mind, and get back into the present moment has been shown to be enormously helpful in mitigating the negative effects of our stress response. When we drop into the present, we're more likely to gain perspective and see that we have the power to regulate our response to pressure.

Here's a short practice you can weave into your day to step into that space between stimulus and response.

A Guided S.T.O.P. Practice for Stress

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From Elisha Goldstein

S = Stop

Stop what you're doing right now, get in a comfortable position, either seated or lying down.

T = Take

Take a few deep breaths. Maybe in through the nose initially, and then out through the mouth. With each exhalation allow your body to soften a bit more. As long as you're here with the breath right now, allow your body to settle into its natural rhythm of breathing. Breathe in and sense the breath coming in. Breath out and sense the breath going out. Allow your body to take the breath it needs in its natural rhythm of being alive.

O = Observe

Begin to observe your body, noticing if there's any tension or tightness anywhere, including the face. If you do notice any of that just allow it to soften, or just mindfully adjust your body as it feels like it needs to. Be aware of how you're feeling emotionally right now. If there's a sense of calm or ease, maybe some restlessness or irritation, or maybe even sadness. Or you could be feeling neutral. Whatever's there, see if you can be aware of it and notice how it feels physically in the body. Continue to observe yourself physically and emotionally in this moment, just letting things be. Be aware of and observe your mind right now, noticing if it seems distracted or cluttered or if it seems like it's settling into being here. Either way, it's OK—the "o" of *observe* is just to allow us to be aware of our experience in the moment; physically, emotionally, and mentally. The moment we notice that our mind is off is a moment we're present. Settle in, be aware of the fullness of your experience physically, emotionally, and mentally, and just let be.

P= Proceed

Proceed is just dropping the question of: "What's most important for me to pay attention to right now?" or "What am I needing right now?" Allow whatever answer is there to simply percolate and arise. Proceed with that in this next moment. Always remember to acknowledge yourself for taking this time. This is a great act of self-care; take the final moment to acknowledge yourself for taking this time.