

Checklist signals

Below you'll find a summary of signals, indicate the ones you recognise.

Physical	Mental	Emotional	Behavioural
Headaches	Concentration problems	Irritable	Sleeping poorly
Backaches	worrying	Crying spells	lacklustre
Neck pain	insecurity	Anger attacks	Feeling depressed
Shoulder pain	Difficulty finding perspective	Loss of control	Feeling unsettled
Stomach issues	forgetfulness	Easily irritated	pressured
Cramps	Indecisiveness	frustrated	Fearful
Hyperventilation	Decreased creativity	Easily upset	Tense
Sweating of shivering	Difficulty making resolutions	Feeling overwhelmed	Not being able to finish tasks
Flu-like feelings or feeling cold		Feeling powerless	Feeling unmotivated to work
Insomnia		loneliness	Feeling withdrawn
Palpitations			Increased smoking
Fatigue			Increased snacking
Dizziness			Increased appetite
Troubled eyesight			Living on autopilot
Ringing in the ears			Cynicism
Eating disorders			Being more critical
Weight problems			More defensive
Nausea or vomiting			Less motivated to exercise
Hypertension			
Skin rashes			
Joint pains			
Speech disorders			
Paleness			

Exercise stress reduction

(De)compression exercise

Raise your shoulders and purposely tense them. Hold on to this tension for a couple of seconds before lowering your shoulders again. You can try to lower them while breathing out. Observe how the tension leaves your body.

You can try this exercise with different body parts. Clench your fists for a few seconds (one hand at a time) and then release them.

You can also tighten your feet, calves, thighs, glutes, arms, face ... in a similar way, and then relax them again.

The great thing about this exercise is that while you focus on your body and, you block out your stressful thoughts.

Diaphragmic breathing

When you feel stressed, it's really important to focus on your breathing. Stress can cause you to breathing to become shallow, which in turn increases the feeling of stress.

Diaphragmic, abdominal or belly breathing – different terms for the same concept, is very beneficial for countering stress. When we are fully relaxed and breathing subconsciously, we often naturally revert to abdominal breathing.

When you feel tense, you can try to implement the following exercise. Place your hands under your ribcage, on your diaphragm. Close your eyes and pay close attention to your breath.

Take slow in and out breaths. Feel your diaphragm expanding when breathing in and contracting when breathing out.

During a couple of minutes focus solely on your breath and try to shut out all other thoughts. It can help to mentally to say the words 'breathing in' and 'breathing out' while following your breath or you can count your breaths if that works better. Often a couple of breaths will already help you relax.

Give your neck a break

Not literally of course – Place your right hand in your neck and your left on your forehead. Lift your neck by pushing your left hand slowly backwards. This helps to alleviate tension in your neck muscles. At the same time, take slow conscious belly breaths. After two or three minutes you will feel the tension melting away.



Alternating nasal breathing

This breathing method is a great way to calm the nervous system and effectively relieve stress. Alternate nasal breathing synchronises and harmonises both parts of the brain which has a positive effect on physical, emotional and mental health. This breathing method increases the level of oxygen in the blood, which has an energising effect. It is an effective way to improve clarity and calmness.

Regular deep breaths provide you with strength, energy, fuel, warmth and space. Slow, deep breaths help detoxify, destress and cool the body and help you relieve tension.

Start in a comfortable, strong, upright position. Lift your right hand and make a V-shape with your index and middle finger. Close off your right nostril with your thumb and breath out fully through your left nostril before starting the breathing exercise.

1. Breath in slowly and evenly through your left nostril for 4 counts, while closing off your right nostril with your right index finger.
2. Close your left nostril with your right middle finger and breath out slowly and deeply through your right nostril.
3. Breath in deeply through your right nostril for 4 counts, while closing off your left nostril with your right middle finger.
4. Finally, close off your right nostril with your right middle finger and breath out fully through your left nostril. Repeat these steps for 3 minutes.



Extra trips

- ∞ Breathe in and out slowly and evenly. Make sure you don't run out of breath and don't force your breathing in any way. Keep your hand centered across your centerline. Keep your head straight and don't tilt it to the side.
- ∞ Count slowly while following your breaths. Make sure your in and out breaths are evenly distributed. Let the length of your breaths expand gradually (4, 5, 6, 7, ... counts), this increases the volume of air you take in.
- ∞ Breathing in through your left and out through your right nostril helps to deeply relax (because it affects your REM-system). Therefore, it's especially beneficial when you need to emotionally and physically destress. It can also help to prevent headaches and help you fall asleep more easily.
- ∞ Breathing in through your right nostril and out through your left, provides energy and clarity. When you're feeling low on energy, this exercise can help as a 'pick me up' (like pushing on the gas pedal in your car)
- ∞ It relaxes your thoughts and emotions and incites clarity and focus. Try to implement this exercise next time before an important meeting or engagement that requires focus and attention.
- ∞ This way of breathing lowers your heart rate and helps prevent anxiety.