

Recognizing your body's danger signals of stress:

- How do you know you're anxious?
- Are you tense?
- Does your head or your stomach flutter?
- Do you breathe too quickly?

Think about your body's signals of anxiety or frustration.

Write them down.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



Practice noticing when these stress signals start. Try deep breathing **as soon as** you notice stress.

Stress Management:

Here are 4 ways to manage stress:

1. Define the problem you are facing. Break it into pieces and set small goals to overcome the problem step-by-step.
2. Check your thinking!
Your stress response gets activated when you think you may not be able to handle a situation.
3. Ask for help! Reach out to family and friends for practical assistance and emotional support.
4. It is impossible to feel stressed when your body is relaxed.

Learn to melt away the stress response with:

- Deep Breathing
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation
- Guided Imagery

Practice these techniques when you are not stressed so that you are prepared to use them when you need them!

Anxiety and Relaxation

For older adults and their families

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or email phe@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **CB.500.An95**

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Deep Breathing Techniques:

Practice deep breathing if you are stressed.

Practice at any time to learn how to do it well.

Place: Find a quiet, comfortable place.

Posture: Sit in a comfortable chair with your feet flat on the floor.

Attitude: Maintain a relaxed, almost passive attitude.

Breath: Slowly take a deep breathe through your nose.

Be aware of your belly and chest rising as you breathe in this fresh air.

Gently exhale out through your mouth.

Repeat this breathing pattern for 3–5 minutes.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Exercises:

Posture: Sit in a comfortable chair with your feet flat on the floor.

Attitude: Maintain a relaxed, slow, deep-breathing pattern.

Tighten each muscle group in the body one at a time.

Hold for 5–7 seconds, then release.

Go through the ten muscle groups at least twice:

- Forehead
- Eyes, cheeks, nose
- Jaws, lips, tongue
- Neck
- Chest, back, shoulders
- Right arm
- Left arm
- Abdomen, buttocks
- Right leg
- Left leg

When you are finished, maintain a few moments of silence with your eyes closed. Focus on your breathing.

Guided Imagery Relaxation:

Think of a place where you feel peaceful and relaxed, such as a warm beach or quiet lake in the mountains. This can be an imagined place or place that you have visited.

Close your eyes and focus on this place. Try to remember or imagine how it affected your senses: sight, smell, touch, sound and taste. This helps make the experience more real.

If you find yourself returning to worrisome thoughts, gently push the thoughts away and return the image.

Try to maintain this focus for at least five minutes.