

Healing After Trauma

Stress Relief after the Hurricanes for Survivors, Rescue & Relief Workers

The following material was written to help people cope with the devastation of the hurricanes. The stress relief techniques are simple and easy to do. They can be done just about anywhere and require no special equipment. Download, copy and distribute as needed.

Stress Relief Packet

	Pages
Practical Stress Relief Techniques.....	1-9
Stress Relief Tips.....	10-11
Hand Out Reminder Card.....	12
(This page contains two cards. Xerox on heavy card stock. Cut the paper down the center. If possible, laminate the card.)	

Healing After Trauma

"Practical Stress Relief Techniques"

for
Survivors
Rescue & Relief Workers



Peg Evans, MS
 Blue Wave Relaxation
www.bluewaverelax.com
Stress Relief Training,
Relaxation CD's, Yoga,
Children's Stress Relief

bwrelax@bellsouth.net
(305) 336-4434

Healing After Trauma

"Practical Stress Relief Techniques"

www.bluewaverelax.com

The hurricane is over, but the hardship continues. No one but you knows how difficult this has been. You have endured tremendous loss, displacement and sorrow. How can you cope until life returns to a more manageable level? **How can healing begin?**

It is possible. Many people want to help and are working to get you back on your feet. You are not alone.

However, you are living in stressful conditions. Most people can cope with stress for brief periods of time, but long-term stress can be difficult. Why is this especially important for you now?

Stress creates fatigue and ongoing stress drains your energy levels. The last thing you need right now is exhaustion. You need strength and energy to cope with your recovery. Take a few minutes during the day to help yourself. **Practice stress relief techniques and regain the strength you need to get your life back.**

The stress relief techniques will help relax tight muscles that hurt your back and give you headaches. Stress relief will calm your mind so you can think clearly. The techniques will ease the pain in your heart so you can relax and get to sleep at night.

First remember two facts:

- 1) Hold on to what you have.
- 2) Hold on to what endures.

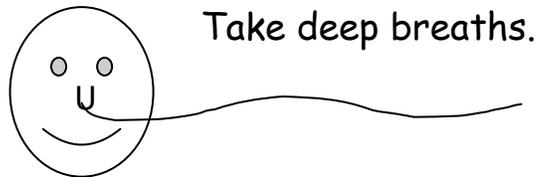
Fact #1- Hold on to what you have. You!

What do you have? Yourself! **You are still here.** You have survived. Use your own body to calm yourself down. You don't need to buy anything or use special equipment. You have what you need right now. **Use your breath to find stability.** Practice Basic Breathing exercises to reduce stress and begin the healing process.

Basic Breathing

Simple Breathing

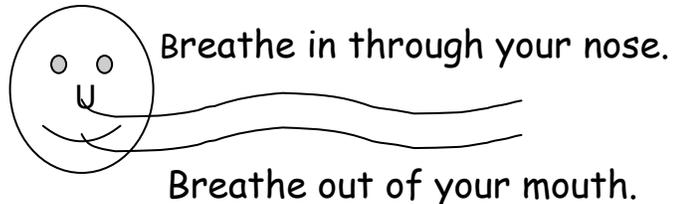
Take a deep breath in.
Let it out fully.
Do this 5 times.



Take deep breaths.

Nose/Mouth Breathing

Breathe in through your nose.
Breathe out of your mouth.
Do this 5 times.



Breathe in through your nose.

Breathe out of your mouth.

Start with five breaths. Breathe for a minute or longer. The more you breathe deeply the better you will feel.

Simple Breathing and the Nose/Mouth Techniques are perfect for calming down. Use them alone, or together to help you relax and release tension.

How does this help? The breath is the bridge between your body and your mind. When you are upset, your breath is shallow and your muscles tighten. If you start taking deep even breaths, your muscles begin to relax and your mind also relaxes. Taking deep breaths dissolves tension.

What else is happening?

Each time you breathe in, you bring fresh oxygen into your body. Oxygen nourishes your muscles and your brain. Oxygen is brain food! This makes you stronger and more mentally alert. Each time you breathe out, you let go of carbon dioxide, or the waste materials. This is a healthy exchange. Your breathing actually cleanses your body.



Breathe with Words of Comfort

Words are powerful. Words can bolster our spirits, or wear us down. Think about how you feel when someone gives you an encouraging word. You feel stronger, more confident. **Use the power of words to make yourself stronger.**

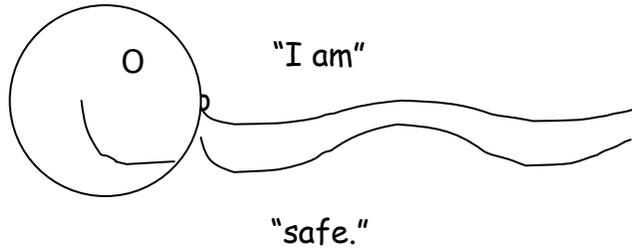


"I am safe, I am calm, I am secure."

Add comforting words to your breathing practice. Use words to calm and balance yourself, such as: "I am safe, I am calm." Say the phrase, "I am safe, I am calm, I am secure," slowly three times and notice how you feel.

Give the words more power by pairing them with Simple Breathing.

Breathe in and say, "I am"
Breathe out and say, "safe."



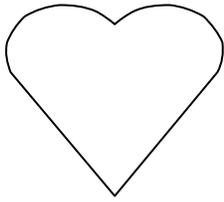
Try the following words with the breath and see how relaxed you can feel.
You can say them quietly, or silently to yourself.

<u>Breathe In</u>	<u>Breathe Out</u>
I am.....	Safe
I am.....	Calm
I am.....	Secure
Let go.....	Let God
Calm.....	Mind
Soft.....	Body
All.....	Right
Everything thing will be.....	All Right.

Some people prefer to use their own words. The words that are the most helpful are the ones that ring true to your heart. Perhaps you would prefer the words to a prayer, or a song. What would you say to help yourself along?

Your words: _____

This exercise can be done anywhere, anytime: sitting, walking, doing chores, driving a car, early in the morning, or before bed at night. Teach this exercise to your children. It will help calm them down and give them a stress relief technique they can do on their own.



Heart Hands Technique

"Your Heart is in Your Hands"

This technique is simple to do and very effective.

Give each finger a letter.

- Thumb... H
- Index.... E
- Middle...A
- Ring.....R
- Little.....T

H E A R T



Hold one finger at a time with your opposite hand. Take two breaths.

As you hold your: Thumb say....."Heart - I Relax my Heart."

Index finger say....."Eyes - I Relax my Eyes."

Middle finger say....."Arms - I Relax my Arms."

Ring finger say....."Rest - I relax the Rest of my body."

Little finger say....."Top - From my Top to my Toes.

I relax and let go."

Repeat the last phrase 3 times.

Breathe gently and rest. You heart is in your hands. You take your hands with you wherever you go. You can do this wherever you are.

Fact #2 - Hold on to what endures Images - Faith



Images - Memories -

Hold on to what endures. Hold onto your peaceful memories. Remember people and things that bring you comfort. Remember a time when you felt safe and happy, such as: sitting on your grandmother's lap, a special holiday with family, fun with friends, or a favorite teacher. You might remember lying in the hammock, or a picnic. See the image in your mind's eye, or just feel it, that's all you need. The memory can keep you going.

Pick an image and breathe gently as you see it. There may be memories of people or times that are no longer here. Even if you cannot physically hold them, you can hold onto their memory. No one can take that away from you; it is yours forever.

Replaying distressing images in your mind create tension. Just thinking about a stressful event in the past can create pain in the present, physically (tight shoulders, sore back, headaches, trouble sleeping) and mentally (confusion, emotional upsets, memory loss).

Reduce your tension and get rid of pain by focusing on comforting images. As your mind begins to release tension, your body will relax too. You start to feel better and the aches and pains begin to fade away.



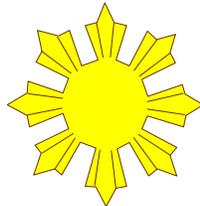


Faith - Call on your faith.

If you believe in God, a higher power, or some other spiritual entity, now is the time to draw on your faith. This will be the rock, your source of strength to hold onto. **Find an image that symbolizes your faith in your mind's eye.** See yourself held and sustained by your beliefs. Some people see an angel protecting them. Others see a scene from a religious story, or prayer. Can you image a comforting picture like that?

Close your eyes and see your source of strength. Feel it in your body and deep in your heart. You are never alone. **You are always watched over and protected even in the time of your deepest trouble.** Breathe gently and remember this.

Remember too, you have already survived other challenges in your life. This may be the biggest, but it is not the first. Think back on your life and remember how you kept on even when times were difficult. You can do this. **Have faith in yourself.**



Remember the Two Facts:

1) Hold on to what you have - YOU

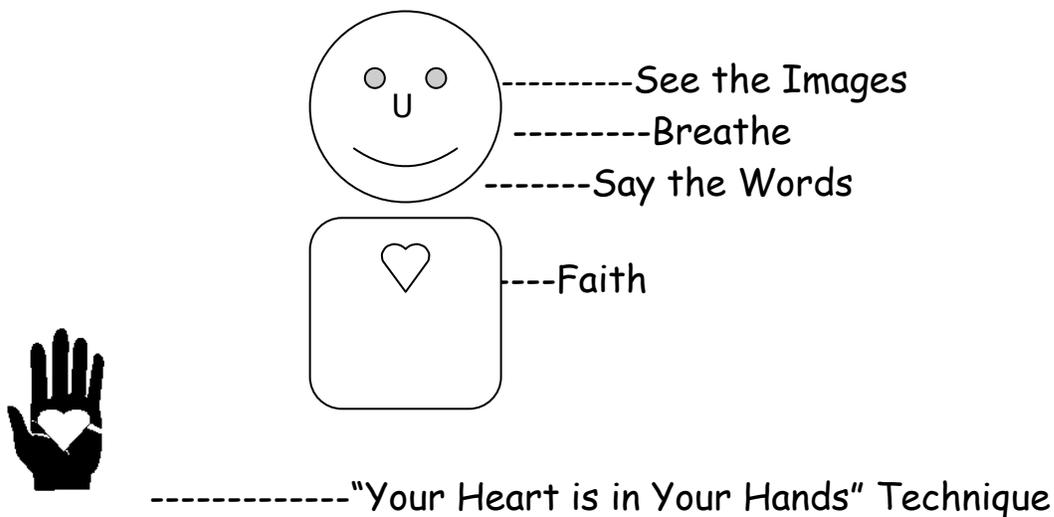
- A) Practice Breathing
 - 1) Simple
 - 2) Nose/Mouth
 - 3) Words of Comfort
 - 4) Heart Hands technique

2) Hold on to what endures

- A) Images - Memories
- B) Faith

I am a survivor.

Remind yourself, "I am a survivor. I can do this. I can get through this."
You have already been through so much. Do your best to take care of yourself.



Practicing stress relief techniques a few minutes during the day will make a difference. Use them to feel strong in the morning, to calm down during the day, to relax and get to sleep at night. As tension leaves your body, you make space for strength to flow in. With strength, faith and calm, you can continue on.

Contact: Blue Wave Relaxation - www.bluewaverelax.com - (305) 336-4434 for information regarding: Stress Relief Training, Relaxation CD's, Yoga, Children's Stress Relief.

Stress Relief Tips for Survivors, Rescue & Relief Workers

1. Give yourself time to heal.
2. Ask for support both personal and professional.
3. Talk with family and friends. Tell them what you have witnessed.
4. Hold hands with family and friends. Hug them.
5. Communicate your experience in whatever way seems comfortable. Write down your thoughts, draw a picture, play music.
6. Spend time with your children. Give your children a chance to talk about their experience in the storm. Encourage children to express themselves with crayons and movement.



7. Nourish yourself with healthy food. You may not be able to get what you want for meals if you are depending on other people to provide for you. Do the best you can. Remember nutritious food supports your recovery. Eating fruit, vegetables and protein will make you stronger. Chocolate won't hurt either!
8. Release tension with exercise. Stretch your arms one at a time toward the sky. Then reach both arms up at the same time. Let your arms float down to your side. Stand taller.

Walking is a terrific exercise. Expend energy through exercise and you release tension built up by stress. Exercising, even a moderate amount, is the quickest way to improve your mood. Walking even 10 minutes boosts your spirits. Try it and see.

Stress Relief Tips - 2 -



9. Practice relaxation techniques. Breathe in deeply, exhale fully. Relax your face, drop your shoulders, and soften your chest. Close your eyes and take three deep breaths.
10. Try to find a moment of calm even when your regular routine is completely disrupted. Take one moment to stop and look out the window Do you see birds and sunshine? The sun has risen again. You are alive; you will keep on keeping on.
11. Give yourself time to feel sad. Many people have suffered great loss. It's OK to cry. Men, women and children all cry. Letting go of emotions is a form of stress release.



12. Be gentle with yourself. Find something soft to hold, a friend, your child, a stuffed bear. Close your eyes and breathe gently. You are safe now.
13. You are not alone. Many people have prayed for you and are willing to help.



14. You may not feel like yourself. You may find yourself distracted, disoriented, angry and feeling numb. You might have nightmares, but in time they will go away. If the symptoms persist after several months, ask for assistance with your local mental health clinic.
16. Don't be afraid to ask for help. This is a sign of strength. Remember you are strong. You are a survivor.

Stress Relief for Survivors

Relax, Release, Rest.

Take a few minutes every day to calm down with three basic exercises.



1) Breathe

A) *Simple Breathing* -Take deep breaths in and out. Do this three times.

B) *Nose/Mouth Breathing*

Breathe in through your nose.

Breathe out of your mouth.

Do this three times.

C) *Repeat both breathing exercises* with your eyes closed.

2) Say Words of Comfort

Words can bolster your spirit. Use the power of words to make yourself stronger.



"I am safe, I am calm, I am secure."

Breathe in and say....."I am"

Breathe out and say....."safe."

Do this three times.

Practice saying, "I am..... calm."
"I am..... secure."

3) Hold onto peaceful memories & faith.

Remember people and things that bring you comfort. Remember a time when you felt happy.



Breathe deeply and say your comforting words.

Remember your peaceful image.

Have faith that everything will be all right.

Breathe in "All" - breathe out "Right."

"Practicing peace restores calm."

www.bluewaverelax.com -(305) 336-4434

Stress Relief for Survivors

Relax, Release, Rest.

Take a few minutes every day to calm down with three basic exercises.



1) Breathe

A) *Simple Breathing* -Take deep breaths in and out. Do this three times.

B) *Nose/Mouth Breathing*

Breathe in through your nose.

Breathe out of your mouth.

Do this three times.

C) *Repeat both breathing exercises* with your eyes closed.

2) Say Words of Comfort

Words can bolster your spirit. Use the power of words to make yourself stronger.



"I am safe, I am calm, I am secure."

Breathe in and say....."I am"

Breathe out and say....."safe."

Do this three times.

Practice saying, "I am..... calm."
"I am..... secure."

3) Hold onto peaceful memories & faith.

Remember people and things that bring you comfort. Remember a time when you felt happy.



Breathe deeply and say your comforting words.

Remember your peaceful image.

Have faith that everything will be all right.

Breathe in "All" - breathe out "Right."

"Practicing peace restores calm."

www.bluewaverelax.com - (305) 336-4434