

Do This 5 Times a Day to Completely Destress

Did you know that in just under a minute, you can take a powerful step toward *decompressing*?

The formal terminology for my technique, *16 seconds*, is called introducing a pattern interrupt. You actually just jam the brakes on a potential surge of stress hormones and all the negative mind-body reactions you start to feel in a stressful moment. You break the flow of conditioned physical and emotional responses.

Sometimes, even just the thought of an irritating situation or person can trigger a stress response; but in 16 seconds you can connect to the present moment. Become a bit calmer... a bit lighter...

When we introduce a pattern interrupt into our flow of thoughts, we can gently step aside from the uneasy memories of the past or the anxious thoughts of the future – and truly ground ourselves back into the present moment – our bodymind moves beyond all that irritation, anger, discomfort, anxiety, less-than, or “it’s not fair” thinking. The constriction vanishes instantly and our next thought, word, or action will come from a less conditioned, more expansive place. Now we are primed for greater possibilities, novel solutions, and infinite potential. Whatever limiting belief was holding us back is momentarily suspended.

Once *16 seconds* becomes part of your daily routine, this state of restful awareness occurs naturally; calm and balance become the norm; anxieties, anger, emotional turbulence, and knee-jerk reactions drift away, as your physical body relaxes and your innate emotional intelligence gently returns to guide your choices.

However, in times of extreme stress, when the body experiences constant physiological arousal over numerous perceived threats that are not life-threatening, the decompressed response can be created through techniques like *16 seconds*, I call it “*16 seconds to clarity*” because four seconds in, four seconds of hold, four seconds out, four seconds of hold equals 16 seconds. And in the 17th second, we are clearer – beyond the moment of emotion!

Let’s try 16 seconds right now.

Think of something that has irritated or bothered you in the past few days . . . a difficult conversation, a disappointment, an unmet expectation. Perhaps someone said they would do something and they didn’t, or they said they would meet you at a certain time and they were late, or they unexpectedly shared something about you with another person and it got back to you. (Don’t go too deep. This isn’t therapy.) But right now, feel free to envision that other person’s face .

. . maybe replay the moment in your mind's eye, even notice someplace in your body that feels connected to the irritation. Take a few moments to settle into that space.

Now take a long, slow, deep breath in through your nostrils, and as you do . . . slowly count to four, and observe the air as it moves into your nostrils and to the back of your throat. Watch your breath as it moves down your chest and deep into your lungs. Feel your belly expand.

Observe your belly being filled, and hold that breath in to the count of four. And just witness the breath in your belly as you silently count. One, two, three, four.

Now slowly, to the count of four, release your breath and watch it as it moves up into your chest, into your throat, into your sinuses, and out through your nostrils.

And when the last wisp of air is out of you, hold that breath out to the count of four. And observe it, watch it, witness it . . . as it dissipates into the air.

Now breathe normally, and let's try it with your eyes closed. Remember: in four—hold four—out four—hold four. And make sure you follow your breath. Observing it along the way is key to the process. (I'll wait right here . . . it's only 16 seconds.)

I'm guessing you're back right now, eyes open and breathing normally. Well, our whole experience was 32 seconds: 16 seconds with your eyes open and 16 seconds with your eyes closed. And in that half a minute while you were observing your breath (assuming you were playing along), you were totally present.

You were not thinking about the past or any of its grievances or regrets, nor moving into the future with all its predictions and projections. You were not thinking about your irritation. You were totally in the present moment. Your mind is a little calmer; your heartbeat has slowed a bit.

You've filled your body with heavily oxygenated blood and nourishing hormones, and in the process, you've released a little bit of stress!

This week, as you are introducing the 16 second pattern interrupt into your daily routine, I encourage you to share *16 Seconds to Clarity* with at least five people. They can be your coworkers, kids, classmates or spouses, but whomever they are, spread the word!

In the meantime, I'll see you in the gap.

peace. -*Davidji*

Watch my video on this topic here: <https://youtu.be/QLCN1wf6KKw>

