

natura)(ySlim®

COACH YOURSELF CALM

How to keep calm in
times of intense stress

Here are a few things you can
do to “keep calm and carry on”
to help you not only survive, but
thrive, during tumultuous times.



Our body's relationship with stress

Knowing that things probably won't go back to exactly how they were can feel overwhelming, and understandably so! Stress and anxiety have already overstayed their welcome, and it appears that they'll remain for at least a bit longer.

The thing is, continued stress and anxiety can negatively impact our mental and physical health. In the short term, that can mean chronic headaches, upset stomach, fatigue, low energy, lack of focus, and changes in our desire to eat. In the long term, that can mean an increased risk for many serious health problems, like heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, addiction, GERD, and more.¹

Basically, stress and anxiety can affect every single major system of the human body.

But here's the good news: You don't have to let a state of stress drive the boat when you are trying to navigate a new normal.

Simply put: You can't control your emotions, but you can control how you respond to them, even in the most stressful situations. Here's how.

Everybody reacts to stress and anxiety differently. If you're feeling out of sorts or less like yourself, it's best to consult with your health care provider.



First, you've got to acknowledge and accept your feelings.

No unwanted emotion ever goes away simply by being told, "I don't like you. Therefore, you don't exist." (If only, right?)

In fact, ignoring feelings only makes them last longer and can do the following:

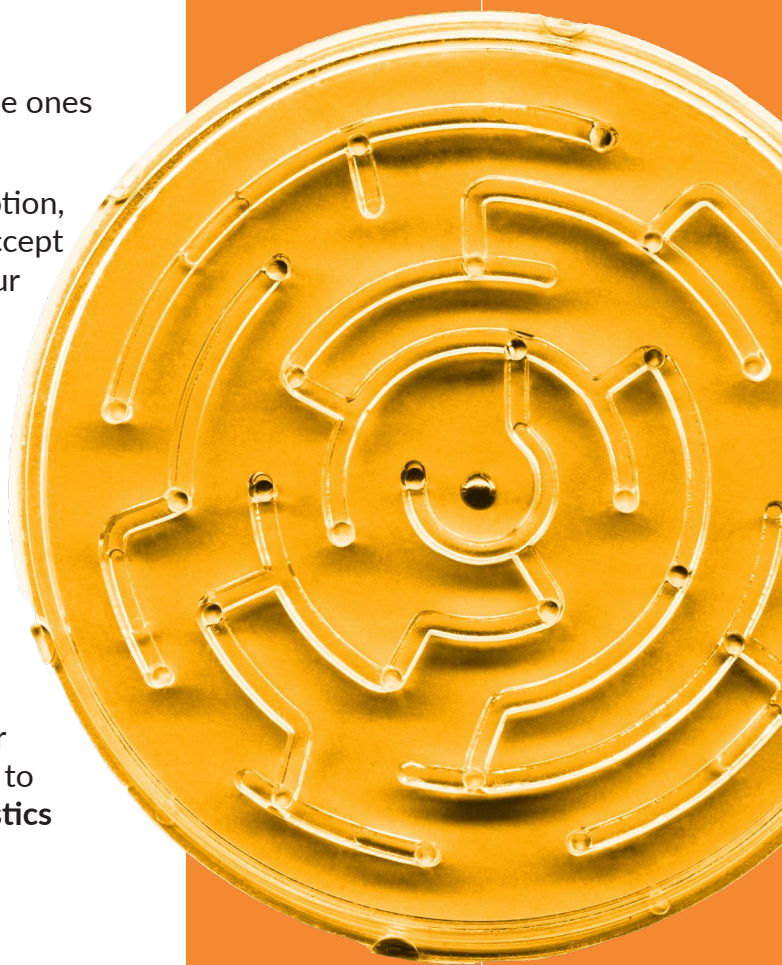
- 1 Prevent us from achieving major life goals
- 2 Make us more dishonest than we'd like to be - with others and ourselves²
- 3 Trap us in a state of anticipation where we're continually expecting to feel the emotion we're trying to avoid²
- 4 Lead to unwanted physical side effects like the ones we mentioned above

When you're feeling stressed or anxious (or any emotion, really), acknowledge that's how you're feeling and accept it. The best way to do this is to say out loud or in your head, "Stress is happening. I am feeling stressed." Once you've acknowledged what you're feeling, you may feel a bit lighter, like you're no longer pushing against that feeling.

Then, you've got to navigate through it.

There are many techniques you can use to coach yourself to a calmer state when life's been a little more life-y than usual. We go in-depth on one of our favorites, RAIN, [inside our program](#). But we're going to share two others we love with you right now: **linguistics shifting** and **temporal distancing**.

Accepting an emotion doesn't mean you're weak. It means you're human. We all experience emotions—both positive and negative. So, don't get down on yourself for feeling whatever you're feeling.



Technique #1:

Linguistics shifting

Coach yourself through a stressful situation by referring to yourself in the third person. (Kind of wild, we know. But hear us out.)

What it's great for:

In-the-moment stressors, like kiddos having temper tantrums in the middle of dinner, water pipes bursting at 2 a.m., and the Wi-Fi cutting out in the middle of that important work meeting.

How it works:

Let's say your name is Taylor, and you just spent all day working on a big work project. When you went to save your work, your computer crashed, and you lost it all. Understandably, you start to panic. You realize you need to calm down a bit so you can approach the situation with a clear head, so you:

- 1 Close your eyes.
- 2 Take a deep breath. (Here's a [video on one of our favorite deep breathing techniques](#).)
- 3 Coach yourself through the situation, referring to yourself by your name. You might say: "Anxiety is happening. Taylor feels anxious. Taylor is going to continue breathing and see if there is a backed-up version of her work saved somewhere. If there is not, Taylor is going to take a deep breath and email her boss and explain what happened. Then, Taylor's going to write down everything she remembers about the work she's done on this project and start again."
- 4 Take another deep breath and start following the plan your inner coach laid out.

Why it works:

It may sound strange but speaking to yourself in the third person allows you to coach yourself through a stressful scenario, just like a trusted best friend or partner would.

When we refer to ourselves using "I" (as in, "I need to finish this project"), we tend to feel overwhelmed by the current moment. Feeling overwhelmed in a moment full of negative emotion prevents us from having proper perspective on it. We're so in the weeds on what's happening and how we're feeling, that we're unable to step back and observe what's going on from a different vantage point.

Simply referring to yourself by your name can make a huge difference in how quickly you're able to return to rational thought and move past the situation with a clear (and calm) mind.



Technique #2: Temporal distancing

Using this technique, you can coach yourself through a stressful period in life by zooming out and shifting your focus on the bigger picture.

What it's great for:

Situations you've been feeling stressed or anxious about for a while now, like social distancing, a strained relationship, or a big move.

How it works:

Let's say you've been trying to sell your house. It's been on the market for a few months. You haven't had any luck, and you're feeling stressed.

When you think about the situation and start to feel yourself spiral into "what if..." or "why me":

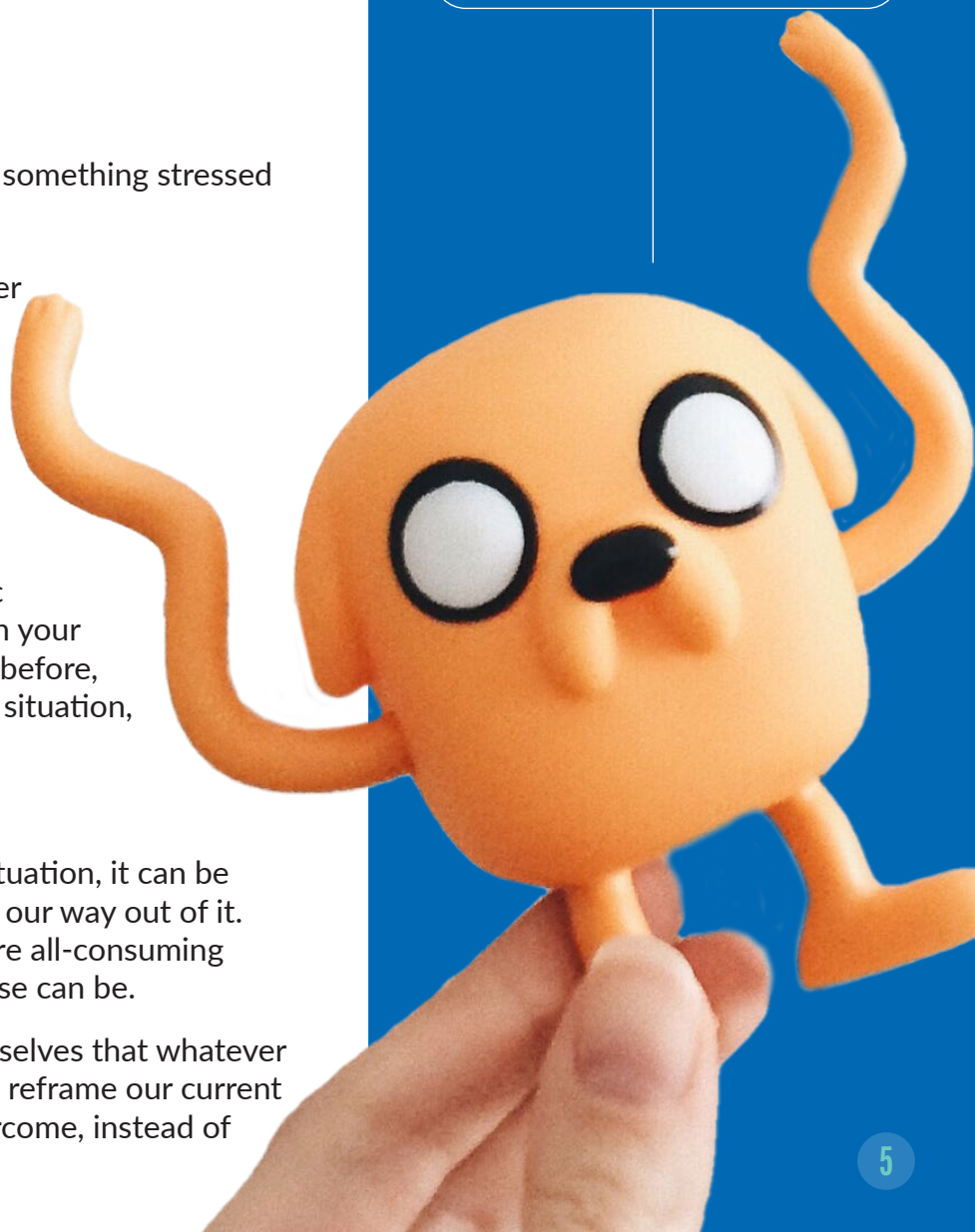
- 1 Pause for a few seconds.
- 2 Take a deep breath.
- 3 Think back to another time when something stressed you out.
- 4 Reflect on that time and remember that it's in the past. Sit with the fact that it's over and no longer has a hold on you.
- 5 Once more, recall the thing you're feeling stressed about now—in this case, selling your house. Realize that the same logic applies to all stressful situations in your life. You've overcome hard things before, and you'll overcome this stressful situation, too.

Why it works:

When we're in the midst of a stressful situation, it can be hard to see how we're ever going to find our way out of it. The more stressful the situation, the more all-consuming feelings of anxiety, frustration, and unease can be.

Temporal distancing helps us remind ourselves that whatever stressful time we're in will pass. It lets us reframe our current situation as a challenge that we can overcome, instead of seeing it as a permanent problem.⁴

A quick note: It might feel a little strange the first few times you try this, which is why it's a good idea to practice before you feel like you need to use it. Practice makes better, and when it comes to your mental health, a little practice goes a long way.



Be gentle with yourself.

As we all begin to establish a new normal, above all else, do your best to be kind to yourself. Adapting to the current state of everything is going to feel strange and scary sometimes. And it's OK if it takes some time and practice.

Just remember to acknowledge your feelings and, if you're feeling up to it, try out these two techniques. With a healthy mindset and these "coach yourself calm" strategies at the ready, you can navigate – and thrive in – the world.

Log in to www.naturallyslim.com/login from your smartphone or computer to watch this week's lessons.

Not a Naturally Slim participant? Visit our blog at www.naturallyslim.com for more tips and resources.

1 https://www.webmd.com/balance/stress-management/stress-symptoms-effects_of-stress-on-the-body#2

2 <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/insight-therapy/201009/emotional-acceptance-why-feeling-bad-is-good>

3 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0963721419861411?cookieSet=1>

4 https://www.ocf.berkeley.edu/~adp/rasclab_v1/uploads/this_too_shall_pass.pdf

