

# Learning to BREATHE Student Workbook—Six-Session Version

“MINDFULNESS is paying attention in a particular way:  
on purpose, in the present moment, and nonjudgmentally.”

—Jon Kabat-Zinn

- B Listen to your **Body**
- R **Reflections** (thoughts) are just thoughts
- E Surf the waves of your **Emotions**
- A **Attend** to the inside and the outside
- T Try **Tenderness**—Take it as it is
- H Practice **Healthy** Habits of mind
- E Gain the inner Edge. Be **Empowered!**

# B

## Theme B: My Mindful/Mindless Life

What things (or activities) in your life do you do on automatic pilot (mindlessly)? What are the things you do that fully engage you (mindfully)? Fill in the boxes with as many examples as you can name. You can also write about how you feel when you do things mindfully (with attention) or mindlessly (without attention).

### My Mindful Life...

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### My Mindless Life...

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# Theme B: Mindfulness in My Life



You can practice mindful attention in all of the moments of your day.

As an experiment, select an activity as “your practice”: a simple daily activity that you choose to do mindfully on a regular basis. Pick one of these examples or come up with your own. Do this activity with awareness and interest; really “be there” for this simple activity. Try adding one new practice each week.

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|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> Washing your face            | <input type="radio"/> Eating lunch                    |
| <input type="radio"/> Going up and down stairs     | <input type="radio"/> Opening and closing your locker |
| <input type="radio"/> Washing dishes               | <input type="radio"/> Walking a pet                   |
| <input type="radio"/> Getting dressed              | <input type="radio"/> Washing your hands              |
| <input type="radio"/> Getting or preparing a snack | <input type="radio"/> Texting                         |
| <input type="radio"/> Eating breakfast             | <input type="radio"/> Standing in line                |
| <input type="radio"/> Answering a phone call       | <input type="radio"/> Waiting for a bus               |
| <input type="radio"/> E-mailing                    | <input type="radio"/> Listening to someone            |
| <input type="radio"/> Driving to a certain place   | <input type="radio"/> Brushing your teeth             |
| <input type="radio"/> Waiting at a red light       | <input type="radio"/> Other _____                     |
| <input type="radio"/> Walking down a hallway       |   |

# My Home Practice: Theme B

1. Practice mindful breathing for at least three breaths at a time, three times per day.
2. Practice the “Body Scan” with audio (see audio downloads at [www.newharbinger.com/27831](http://www.newharbinger.com/27831)) \_\_\_\_\_ times.
3. Try the “Three-Minute Body Scan,” described next in this workbook, each day in school or in some other place.
4. Practice your own special activity mindfully (from theme B, “Mindfulness in My Life”). Note your observations and reflections in the box below.

### Observations and Reflections:

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# Theme B: Tips to Take Away: Three-Minute Body Scan

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You can do a short “Body Scan” at any time, especially if you notice that you’re feeling tense or anxious.

## Try it:

- while seated in class
- before tests
- before athletic events
- before speaking in public
- before getting out of bed in the morning
- before falling asleep
- while standing in line
- during social events
- before an interview



## How to do it:

1. Use your attention to find your breath in your body.
2. Starting from either your feet or your head, move your attention through your body and notice your experience. Scan for tension in your feet; lower back; stomach; shoulders; face, jaw, or forehead; or wherever you hold tension in your body.
3. As you scan each area, breathe into the area, releasing tension and bringing in new energy as you did in the “Body Scan.”
4. Expand your awareness to your entire body and feel the breath move from your head to your feet.

# Theme R: Big Event Circles

R

## Story 1

Write your thoughts in the circle below.

Write how you're feeling in the circle below.

Two large, identical dotted circles are positioned side-by-side on a light gray background. Each circle is designed for a student to write their thoughts or feelings inside.

## Story 2

Write your thoughts in the circle below.

Write how you're feeling in the circle below.

Two large, identical dotted circles are positioned side-by-side on a light gray background. Each circle is designed for a student to write their thoughts or feelings inside.

## R

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## This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

# Theme R: Tips to Take Away: Dealing with Troubling Thoughts

Notice the thoughts that are arising in your mind.



## Try the mindful approach:

1. Become aware of what your mind is doing: *thinking*. It's generating thoughts. The thought is like a bubble that arises in the space of the mind. It's just what the mind does.
2. Step back and examine the thought with curiosity. How loud or soft is it in your mind? How strong is it? How long does it last? Can you notice sensations in your body when the thought arises? Don't try to push it out of your mind. Just observe.
3. Get in touch with your breath as you observe the thought. Remember, it's just a thought. Don't struggle with it, because that can make it stronger.
4. Watch the thought change in intensity. Return your full attention to your breath.



# My Home Practice: Theme E

1. Practice mindful breathing for at least three breaths at a time, three times per day.
2. Do a short mindfulness practice on feelings (once a day, ideally; see the audio downloads at [www.newharbinger.com/27831](http://www.newharbinger.com/27831)).
3. Begin to notice thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations as they arise throughout the day.
4. Practice being kind to yourself when uncomfortable feelings arise. Don't try to push them away. Just notice them and where they show up as sensations in your body.
5. Keep practicing mindfulness in your day-to-day life, especially in the practice of your choice (from theme B, "Mindfulness in My Life"). Note your observations and reflections in the box below.

### Observations and Reflections:

[illegible]

# Theme E: Tips to Take Away: Working with Anger

Anger is an emotion that has a long list of close relatives: irritation, frustration, impatience, rage, hatred, annoyance, resentment, irritability, crankiness, and so forth. Anger and its variations can cause us to “heat up.” Notice the way we refer to angry feelings, for example, “boiling mad,” “hot-headed,” or “seeing red.” Anger impairs our thinking and can feel overwhelming. It makes us lose our balance. Sometimes when we’re angry, we act impulsively in ways that end up hurting ourselves and others. Shouting, threatening, fighting, rudeness, disrespect, and name-calling are a few examples. Sometimes we take out our anger in quieter ways by gossiping, excluding others, and making them feel bad. Most of all, anger can hurt our health, well-being, and social relationships. Chronic anger ramps up the stress response and reduces our own level of happiness.

## E

### Kick the anger habit!

Try a mindful approach to difficult emotions. When you feel yourself getting angry:

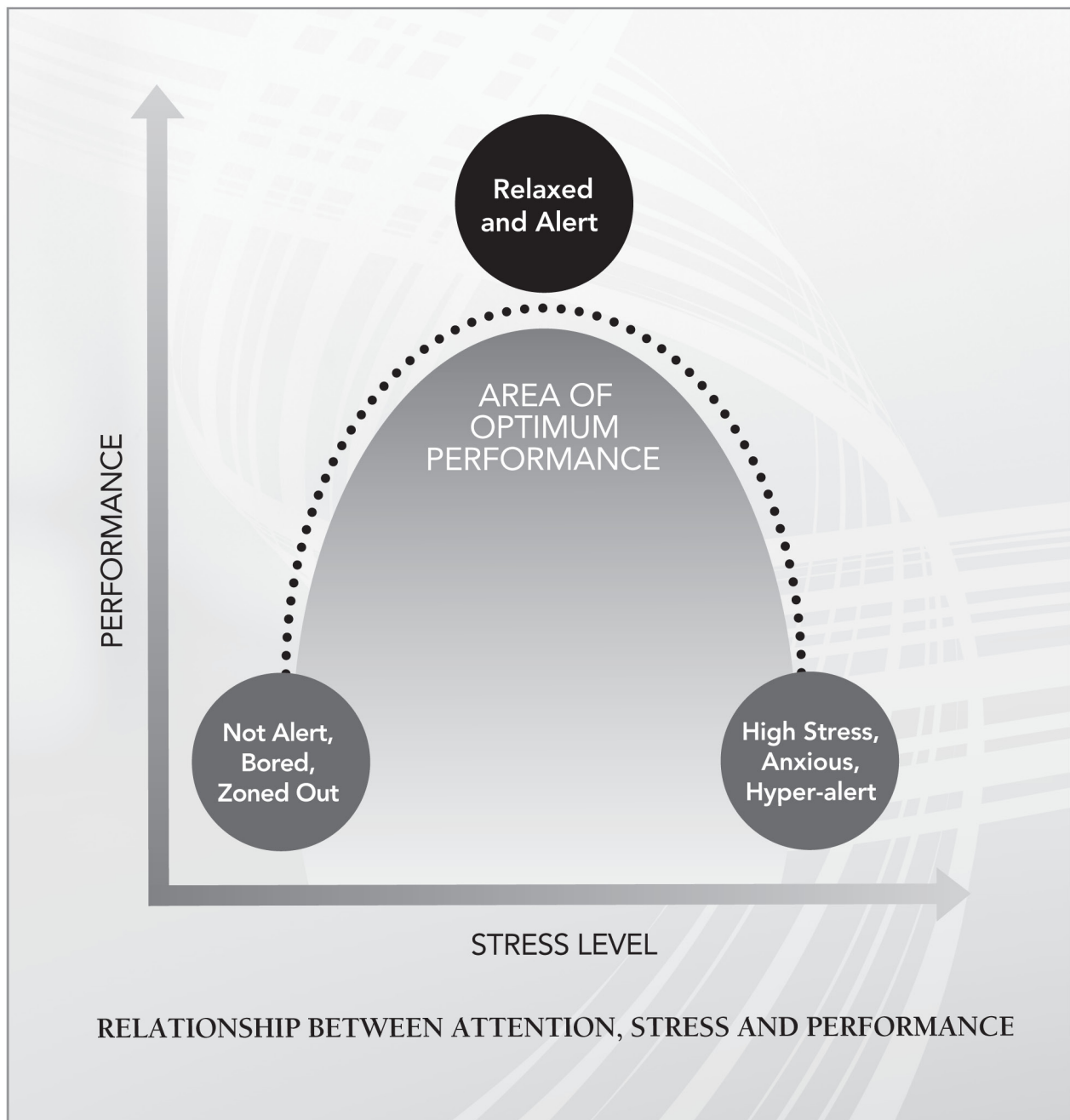
1. Stop and pay attention. Notice with interest where you are feeling the anger in your body. What does this experience feel like for you?
2. Turn your attention toward the feelings as they arise: Are they sharp, hard, soft, intense, fast, slow, burning? Are they moving around in your body? Are they centered in one place? Do they change as you observe them?
3. Experience the feelings of anger as waves, coming and going. Don’t try to block them, avoid them, or get rid of them. Don’t try to hold on to them or keep them going. Just don’t act on the angry feelings right now. You can view anger as a strong energy in the body and mind, like a sudden storm.
4. Tune in to the breath and see if you can ride the waves of the anger and watch them get smaller and smaller.

Now you’re in a better position to make a smart decision about how to act.

### Remember:

You can use this approach to work with any difficult feelings. Just substitute the name of a feeling in the steps above. Surf the waves of your annoyance, boredom, sadness, disappointment, jealousy, and so on. Breathe and watch the feelings rise and fall. They’re not fun, but they will pass. And you will become more empowered.

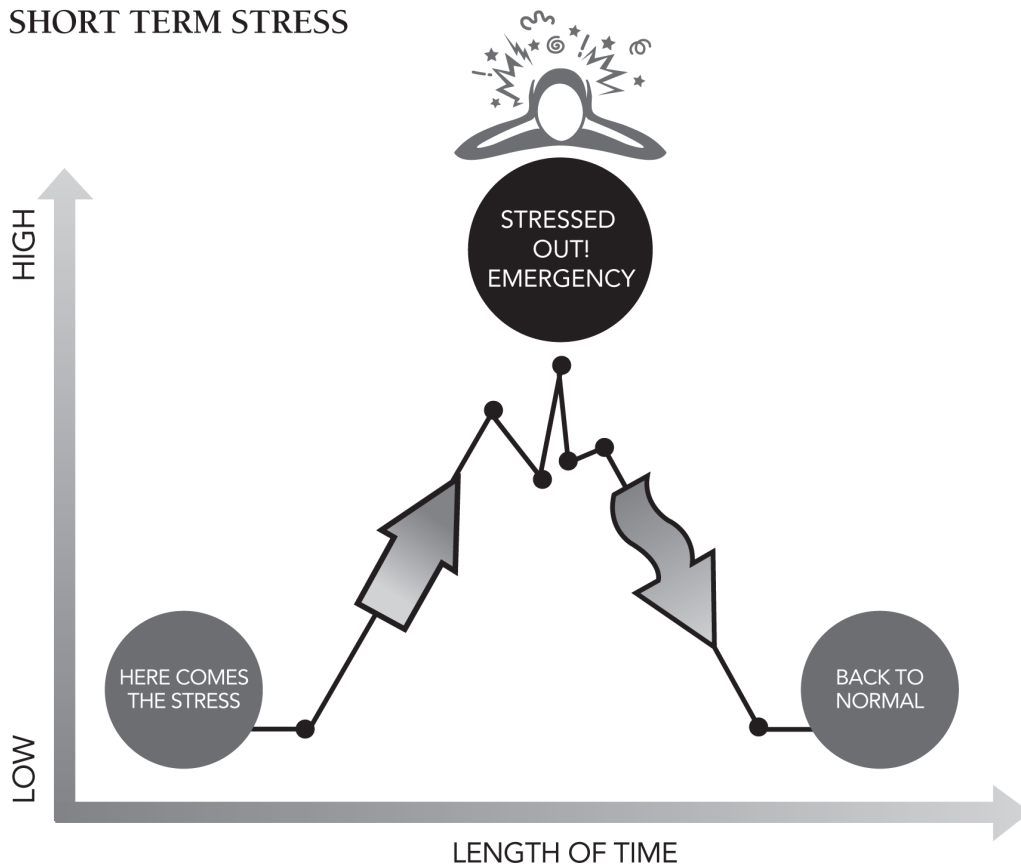
## Theme A: What's the Best Balance?



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# Theme A: What's My Limit?

## SHORT TERM STRESS



## Did you know?

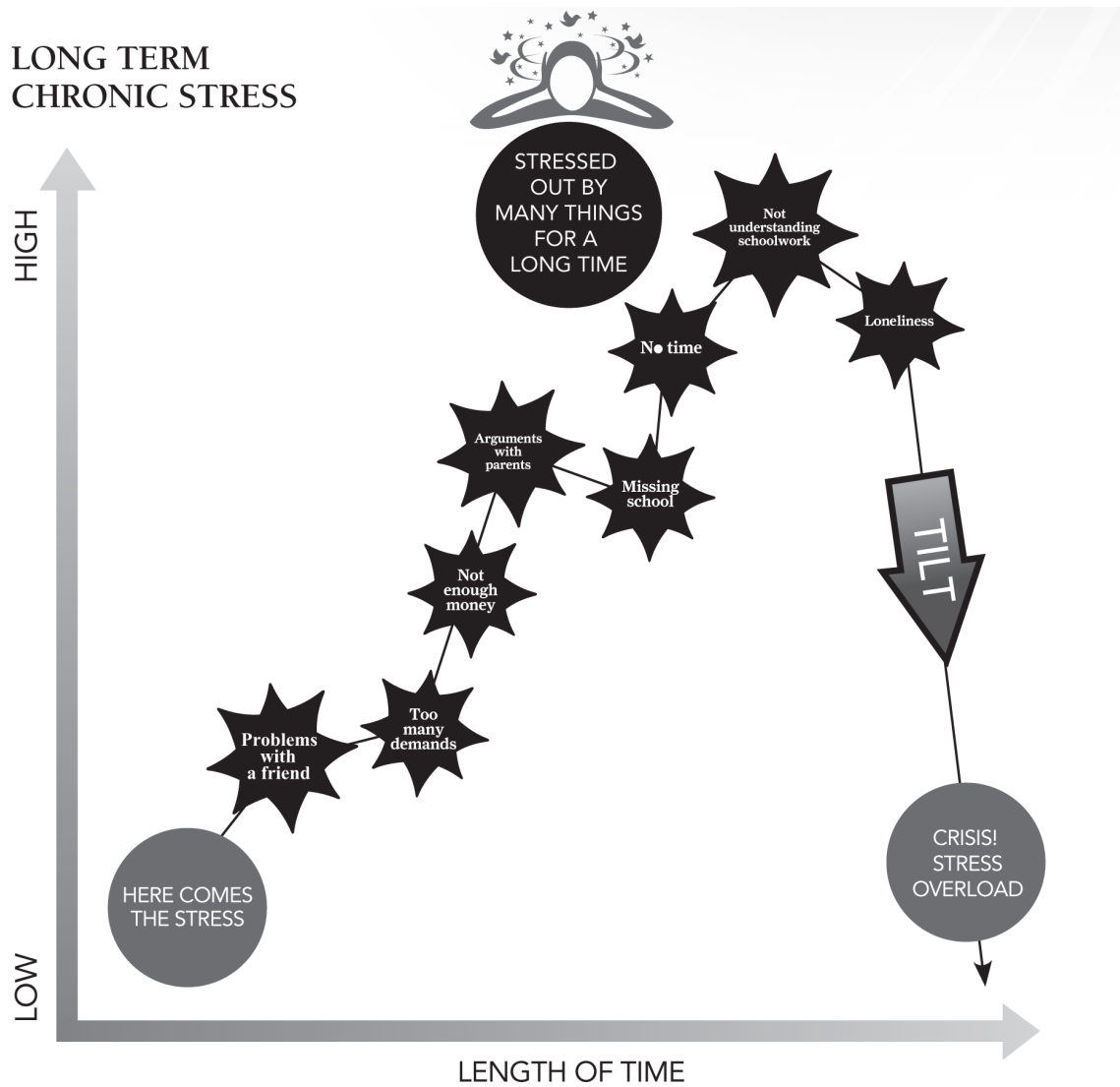
- You can notice your body's stress response when it occurs because of the many physical changes involved. Your heart races, your palms sweat, your breath gets more shallow, and so forth. Your body's stress response is intended to help you deal with threats.
- Some foods (cola, coffee, tea, chocolate) and drugs (nicotine) also cause a stress-like reaction in your body.
- Our bodies respond to psychological stressors in the same way that they respond to physical threats.
- Our perceptions play a major role in whether or not we feel stressed.

Some interesting websites on stress:

[www.stress.org](http://www.stress.org)

[www.isma.org.uk](http://www.isma.org.uk)

[http.pbs.org/programs/killer-stress](http://pbs.org/programs/killer-stress)



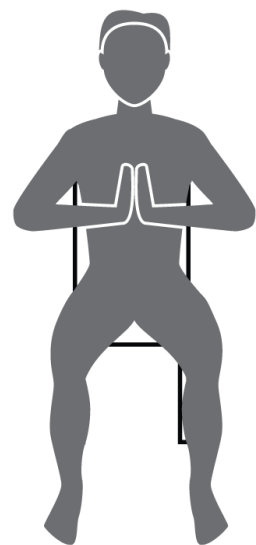
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List your chronic stressors

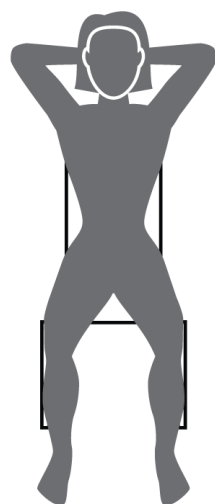
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| 1. _____ | 6. _____  |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ |

Circle your top three stressors.

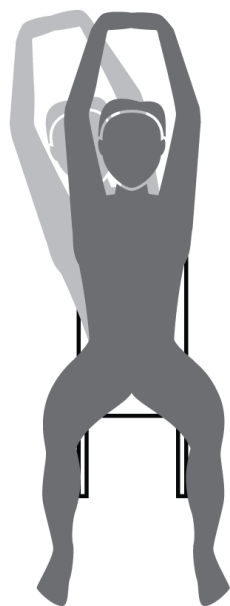
Theme A: Sitting Postures:



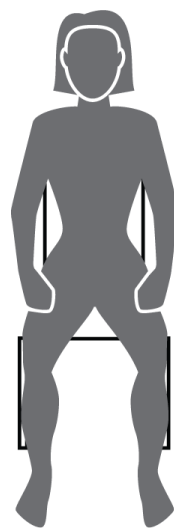
Palm Press



Upward Stretch



Seated Tree

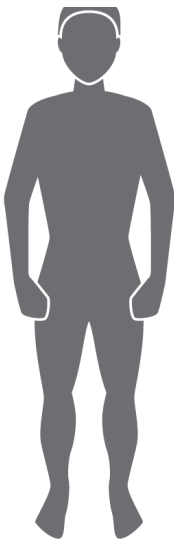


Seated Twist

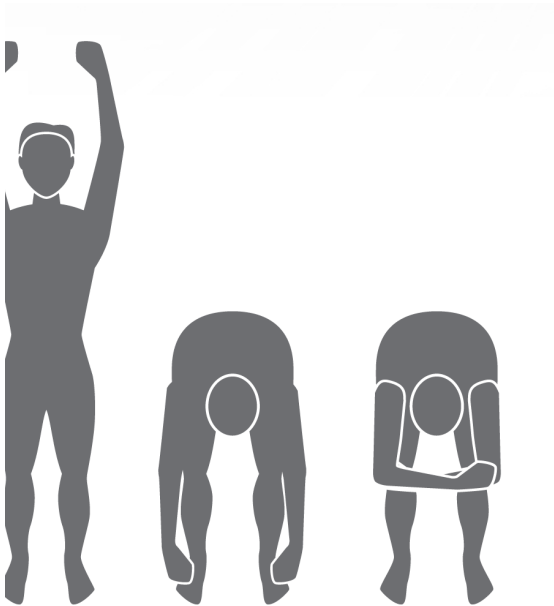


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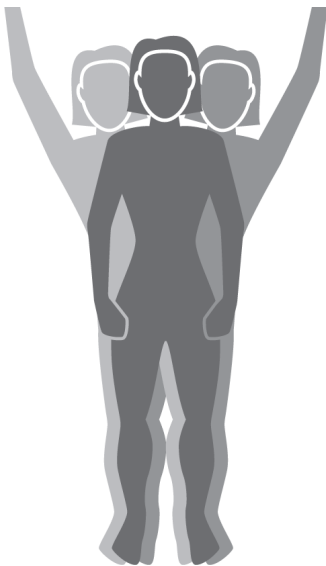
Theme A: Standing Postures:



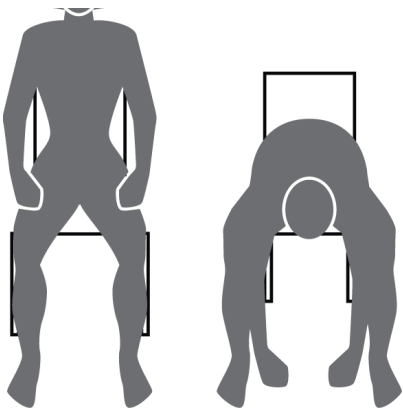
Mountain Pose



Upward Stretch



Reach Up



Taking Your Seat

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# Theme A: Memo from the Body-Mind

To: Body-Mind Owners: All Makes and Models  
From: Your Stress-Response System  
Re: Your Stress  
Message: High Priority!

Dear Owner:

As the system primarily involved in your body-mind's stress response, we want to keep you informed about our operations so that you will be in a better position to keep us in good working order. Your body-mind's stress response came with your basic equipment. It is intended to prepare you to fight, flee, or freeze in case of a real emergency so that you can survive.

Specifically, we are a coordinated group that includes the *autonomic nervous system* (ANS) and the *hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis* (HPA axis for short). Here's how we operate. You have a threat detector located deep inside your brain called the *amygdala*. When the amygdala registers the information that your safety is threatened or that there's something out there to worry about, the *sympathetic part* (SNS) of the *autonomic nervous system* (ANS) leaps into action to help protect you. Your brain immediately sends signals to the interior of the *adrenal glands*, which sit on top of your kidneys, telling them to release the hormone (and neurotransmitter) *adrenaline* into your bloodstream. Remember that hormones are chemical messengers that have powerful effects on your body-mind. If you can recall feeling your hair stand on end, your heart beginning to pound, your palms beginning to sweat, and your stomach turning (possibly when faced with a test you didn't expect), you know our power to get your system revved up to fight, freeze, or run away.

We also provide an additional homeland-security system called the HPA axis. Two of our components (*hypothalamus* and *pituitary*) are located deep in the brain. After a red alert from the amygdala, the hypothalamus gets this ball rolling by secreting hormones into the hypothalamic-pituitary circulatory system. The principal one is CRH (*corticotrophin-releasing hormone*), which triggers the pituitary to release ACTH (also called corticotrophin). ACTH jump-starts the adrenals to release another stress hormone, called *cortisol*, from their surface into the bloodstream. If you've ever been scared to death watching a horror movie alone at night, you know that adrenaline works within seconds, but cortisol backs it up over the course of minutes or hours. It takes about an hour for the effects of cortisol to leave the system. When the stressful situation is over and you have prevailed, the other arm of the ANS, called the *parasympathetic nervous system* (PNS), moves into action by relaxing your body-mind and allowing it to rebalance in preparation for the next threat. The *vagus nerve* that originates in the brain is part of the PNS and sends signals to the heart (and other organs) that regulate the heartbeat (among other things). The heartbeat slows down as a result of activation of the vagus nerve. It works like a brake on the stress-response system. When you inhale, you activate the sympathetic system, and when you exhale, you activate the parasympathetic system. That's why some relaxation practices teach extending the exhalation to strengthen the parasympathetic (or "cool-down") response. Let's try it. Take a deep breath right now, and then exhale through your mouth in a slow, long, smooth sigh. Whew! Thank goodness for that.

Anyway, so much for our trusty apparatus.

It has come to our attention that many owners are activating the stress-response system for extended periods of time without a break. Because owners might not realize the damage they do to

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their systems when they are under constant stress, we take the opportunity in this memo to present it in some detail.

We find it hard to believe that this constant activation is due to unceasing, real threats on owners' health and safety (such as constantly coming face-to-face with wild animals or other equally scary situations). We've been told that owners are activating their systems because of internal threats like worries, fears, anger, resentments, foiled expectations, disappointments, and so forth. Now we acknowledge that life can be really tough. We have the greatest sympathy for what owners are going through. However, we—the elements of your stress system—need to inform you of the fact that we are being overworked when the stressful events that keep us going are happening in owners' minds. In other words, owners who constantly ruminate, let problems fester, hold on to jealousy, or continually feed the fires of anger are really wearing us out!

Here's the view from the inside. Constant activation of the system results in too much cortisol pumping into the bloodstream. Too much cortisol dismantles your *immune system*. Remember the immune system? Immune system cells are constantly on patrol, killing invaders and saving you from illness. Without a well-functioning army of immune cells, your body isn't going to heal from invaders very well. If you get sick (low immunity) during exam time (high stress), don't say we didn't warn you.

Too much cortisol also damages and even kills cells in your brain (*hippocampus*) that are responsible for learning and memory. That's not going to help you graduate! Stress hormones like adrenaline cause the heart to pump blood faster, potentially resulting in high blood pressure and damage to your arteries because of the force of blood on the delicate vessels. Stress hormones like cortisol increase your appetite, especially for comfort food, because your body reads their chemical message as "Yikes! An emergency! Better store up some energy so I can run away when I need to." Stress hormones are related to stomach discomfort, and you know that's no fun either. Recall that it takes about an hour for the body to sop up the excess cortisol floating around in the bloodstream. If you have even one stress reaction per hour—well, *you* do the math. And remember, you probably don't really have to encounter some terrible threat like a wild animal on your way to school. Your body-mind, alas, doesn't know the difference between "real" and "mental" stress. That's what keeps us so overworked. Thinking about stressful things makes us work overtime. Your mind is the gateway to stress.

Did you realize that about 70 percent of cases of insomnia are caused by stress? Body-Mind Owners need their sleep to be on top of their game, so this can be a big problem. Lack of sleep can make you grouchy, not to mention pretty sad. The stress-related changes in your immune system also result in making too much of certain chemicals, called *cytokines*, that float to the brain and affect your moods. It's normal to feel pretty sad when bad things happen, but too much stress can make you depressed if you don't know how to roll with it.

Last, let's not forget the risk of addictions. We understand that stress seems to be temporarily reduced by taking an addictive substance or engaging in some stress-avoidance activity. The point here is that it's temporary. You can count on feeling a crash shortly afterward. This only increases anxiety and all those awful stress-related feelings.

We could go on and on, but we think we've made our point. We want to keep on working for you so that you'll have a happier, healthier life. Here's the bottom line: the things that stress you out in your life are not going away. You need to learn how to relate to your stress in ways that don't harm your system. Working with your mind and your mental attitude is a great place to start. Please, keep up the good work.

Yours truly,

Your Body-Mind Team

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# My Home Practice: Theme A

1. Practice mindful breathing for at least three breaths at a time, three times per day.
2. Do a short mindful-movement practice (once a day, ideally; see audio downloads at [www.newharninger.com/27831](http://www.newharninger.com/27831)). Use the illustrations for “Sitting Postures” and “Standing Postures”.
3. Continue to notice thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations as they arise throughout the day.
4. Continue practicing mindfulness in your day-to-day life, especially in the area you chose in theme B, “Mindfulness in My Life.” Add the practice of kindness to yourself and others.
5. Use workbook pages “More Ways to Practice Mindfulness in Action” and “Eating Awareness Calendar” to help with mindful-walking and mindful-eating practices.
6. Note your observations and reflections in the box below.

### Observations and Reflections:

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# Theme A: Tips to Take Away: More Ways to Practice Mindfulness in Action

## Mindful Eating

- Break out of eating on “automatic pilot.”
- Experiment with eating mindfully by paying attention to all the sensations of eating.
- Try eating a snack or a meal in silence.
- Look at the food on your plate with curiosity: notice colors, textures, shapes, aromas, and so on.
- Slow down the pace of eating.
- Before chewing, experience what the food feels like in your mouth.
- As you chew, notice all the sensations.
- Try practicing gratitude for all the people whose work made it possible for you to eat this food.

## Mindful Walking

- Pay attention to all the sensations of movement as you walk.
- Notice the contact of your feet with the floor or the ground.
- Notice the sequence of each step by slowing down your walking in the following way: Lift your right foot, place the heel down, and then place the upper part of the foot down. Repeat with the other foot.
- As you move from place to place, use the transition as a time to be in your body by experiencing the sensations of walking.
- Feel the movements of your body as you walk up stairs.
- Choose a period of time to practice mindful walking. Select an area or path (even in your bedroom) where you can practice undisturbed. Begin by slowing down your pace and focusing your full attention on an aspect of walking (for example, your feet, the movement of your legs, and so on). When your mind wanders, just bring your attention back to the experience of walking.

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# Theme A: Eating Awareness Calendar

Practice mindful eating by choosing one experience of eating each day and trying to become aware of that experience while it is happening.

Record in detail your responses to the questions below after the period of eating.

	What was the experience? (for example, snack, meal)	Were you aware of the experience while it was happening? (yes or no)	How did your body feel during the experience? Describe the sensations in detail.	What moods, feelings, and thoughts came along with this experience?
Day 1				
Day 2				
Day 3				
Day 4				
Day 5				
Day 6				
Day 7				



# Theme T: Ways We Take Care of Ourselves

## Observations and Reflections:

Thoughts



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Actions



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Feelings



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*Theme T: Ways We Don't Take Care of Ourselves*

Observations and Reflections:

Thoughts



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Actions



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Feelings



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# My Home Practice: Theme T

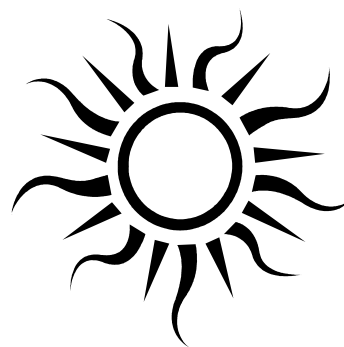
1. Practice mindful breathing for at least three breaths at a time, three times per day.
2. Try to do a short loving-kindness practice (once a day, ideally; see audio downloads at [www.newharbinger.com/27831](http://www.newharbinger.com/27831)). Change the language to suit yourself.
3. Begin to notice thoughts, feelings, and physical sensations as they arise throughout the day. Pay particular attention to thoughts and feelings that are related to self-criticism or criticism of others. Try offering yourself and others kindness instead.
4. Continue practicing mindfulness in your day-to-day life, especially in your practice area. Note your observations and reflections in the box below.

### Observations and Reflections:

[illegible]

# Theme T: Tips to Take Away: Dial Up the Gratitude

Positive emotions provide many benefits to physical, intellectual, emotional, and social well-being. In particular, gratitude can be an effective antidote to anger, hostility, and irritation, which are bad for your health. We are used to thinking of gratitude as a feeling that comes and goes. But gratitude is also a *practice*. Recent scientific studies show that you can cultivate positive emotions like gratitude. You might have heard that researchers who studied lottery winners found that these instant millionaires often ended up much less happy than they were before they won huge sums of money. How can you explain this? It appears that happiness doesn't come exclusively from what's outside us. It's really more a matter of what's happening inside us. Daily practice of gratitude can increase your happiness in real and long-lasting ways.



## Try these techniques

1. Pay mindful attention to good things in your day, no matter how small they are.
2. Keep a daily log of things that you are grateful for. Make this a regular routine by adding to the list each night before you go to bed.
3. Turn things around and practice gratitude for the things that seem less desirable. Do you hate homework? Practice being grateful that you can go to school.
4. When you're feeling low or upset, practice looking for the blessings. Stop. Tune in to your breath. Look around and find three things that you're grateful for.
5. Say thank you or write a letter of gratitude to someone who has helped you.
6. Notice the kindness of others, and say thank you often.
7. Experience the feelings of gratitude in your body, around the area of your heart. Tune in to this feeling several times each day.
8. Try writing in your journal about gratitude. Here are some questions to get you started:

Select something in your life for which you are grateful. It could be a person, object, activity, memory, and so on. Write in your journal your responses to the following questions: *Why am I grateful for this? How does it enrich my life? How would I feel if I lost it? How could I show my gratitude for this?*

T



# My Home Practice: Theme H

1. Practice mindful breathing as often as possible throughout the day.
2. Make a plan to practice a mindfulness activity of your choice (mindful breathing, body scan, loving-kindness, mindful eating, mindful walking, and so on) each day.
3. Note your observations and reflections in the box below.

### Observations and Reflections:

[illegible]

# Theme E: Tips to Take Away

## *Mindfulness Cues*

You can enhance your practice of mindfulness by using cues to remind yourself to pay attention in order to be really present for your one and only life.

- ★ Put a note on your computer screen or your mirror reminding yourself to “BREATHE.”
- ★ Drive or walk with the music turned off, for a change, to notice your surroundings.
- ★ Take three slow, mindful breaths as you get up in the morning and before you go to sleep.
- ★ When you talk to a friend, really listen. Gently let your own thoughts and preoccupations go, and tune in to what this person is saying.
- ★ Download a bell sound to your computer, and set it to ring at random moments. Each time it rings, take a mindful breath.
- ★ Choose a path or street that you walk or run down regularly. Make that your “mindful walking or running path” and practice mindful walking or running each time you go there.
- ★ Go outside at night for three minutes and really look at the stars.
- ★ Go outside during the day for three minutes and really look at something beautiful in nature.
- ★ Exercise mindfully. Pay attention to the movement of your body.
- ★ Practice taking a mindful breath before responding to an e-mail or text message.
- ★ Center your attention by taking five mindful breaths before you start your homework.
- ★ Continue to expand on your “Mindfulness in My Life” activity in theme B.