

# Stress-Relief Meditation

You can use this practice to deal with painful emotions or bodily stress. Below are steps for a short exercise developed by Nicco Boss, based on the guided meditation "Working with Difficulties" produced by UCLA's Mindful Awareness Research Center (MARC).

1. Find a posture that's comfortable to you. Your eyes may be open or closed, but you may find it easier to maintain your focus if you close your eyes. Sit comfortably with your spine straight, but not too tight, and your hands resting wherever they're comfortable.
2. Go inside yourself and try to locate a part of your body that feels good to you right now – pleasant, safe, at ease (or at the very least, neutral). Let your focus go to this pleasant part of your body – hands or feet or wherever you've chosen – and let your attention rest there.
3. Feel and notice the sensations in this part of your body. Let your mind relax a bit, focusing on that part of the body.
4. And now if there's something difficult that's happening for you – a difficult emotion, or a physical sensation that's painful – let your attention go to that. It may be an aching in your shoulder or back, or a headache. Or it could be a sense of sadness or anxiety or anger.
5. Where do you feel that sensation in your body? Where do you feel that emotion in your body? Notice it. Just notice it for one moment. Tap into it. Feel it. Make sure to breathe: inhale, exhale.
6. And now return your attention back down to the area that feels at ease – your hands or feet or legs. Just let yourself stay there for a moment, feeling it, sensing it, and relaxing. Maintain mindfulness of the present moment, yet give yourself a break from what could be potentially overwhelming to feel.
7. And now once again return your attention to that part of the body that feels unpleasant – the body ache or pain, or the painful emotional sensations in your body. Notice the vibrations in your chest, or the clenching in your belly, or the tightness in your jaw. Just notice and breathe and let it be there. Just relax and let whatever is there be there.
8. And then bring your attention again back to this pleasant or neutral part of the body – hands, feet, so forth. Relaxing, stay present and alert. Feel the safety and the connection in that place.
9. Now let yourself stay connected to this place, but see if you can cast what we might call a sidelong glance at the difficult area in your body. Is it possible to still feel connected to your body in the area that feels good, and yet know there's something going on that feels unpleasant? Is it possible to just let it be there, keeping maybe 75% of your attention on the part that feels peaceful and at ease?
10. Still breathing, casting the sidelong glance at this difficult area, notice what happens to it. Is it shrinking, changing, and shifting into something else? Become aware of whatever it's doing. Relax and breathe.
11. Now see if you can bring some loving kindness to yourself for whatever you're feeling right now – physical pain, emotional pain. Allow it to diminish by focusing on the good. Hold yourself with kindness. Feel good in knowing that you're not the only one in pain, so may we all be free from our pain and suffering. May we all have happiness!