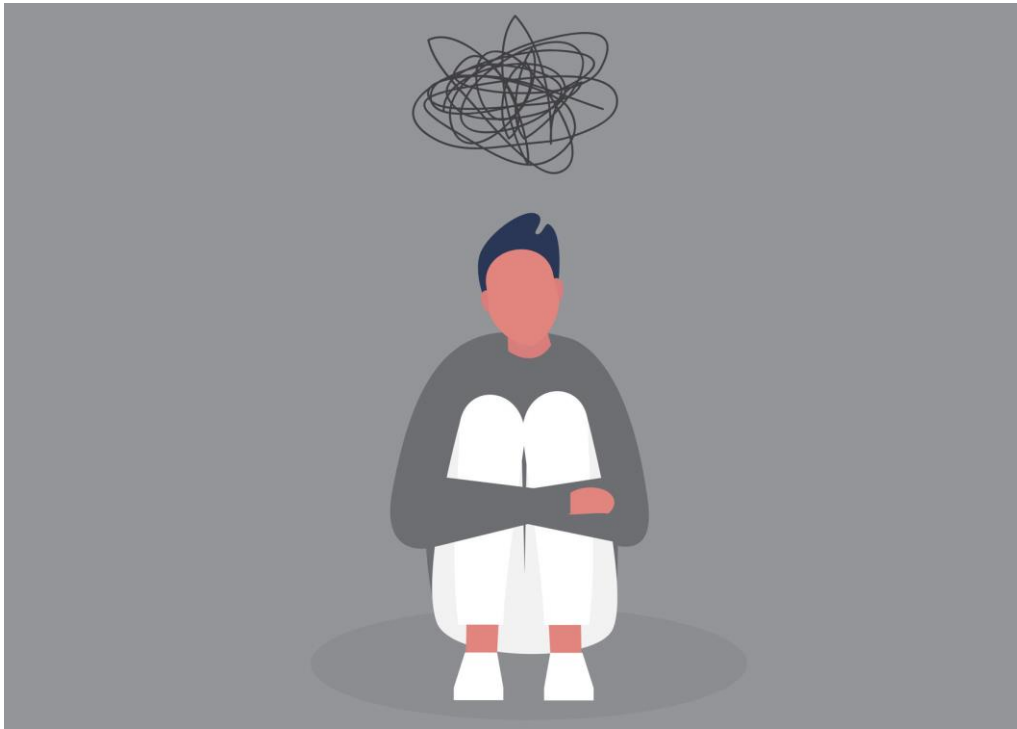


# healthline



## 15 Ways to Calm Yourself Down

We all worry and get upset from time to time. It's a normal part of life, right? But what happens when that anxiety or anger takes over, and you can't calm down? Being able to calm yourself in the moment is often easier said than done.

That's why having a few strategies you're familiar with can help you when you're feeling anxious or angry. Here are some helpful, actionable tips you can try the next time you need to calm down.

### 1. Breathe

"Breathing is the number one and most effective technique for reducing anger and anxiety quickly," says Scott Dehorty, LCSW-C, of Delphi Behavioral Health.

When you're anxious or angry, you tend to take quick, shallow breaths. Dehorty says this sends a message to your brain, causing a positive feedback loop reinforcing your fight-or-flight response. That's why taking long, deep calming breaths disrupts that loop and helps you calm down.

There are various breathing techniques to help you calm down. One is three-part breathing. Three-part breathing requires you to take one deep breath in and then exhale fully while paying attention to your body.

Once you get comfortable with deep breathing, you can change the ratio of inhalation and exhalation to 1:2 (you slow down your exhalation so that it's twice as long as your inhalation).

Practice these techniques while calm so you know how to do them when you're anxious.

### 2. Admit that you're anxious or angry

Allow yourself to say that you're anxious or angry. When you label how you're feeling and allow yourself to express it, the anxiety and anger you're experiencing may decrease.

### **3. Challenge your thoughts**

Part of being anxious or angry is having irrational thoughts that don't necessarily make sense. These thoughts are often the "worse-case scenario." You might find yourself caught in the "what if" cycle, which can cause you to sabotage a lot of things in your life.

When you experience one of these thoughts, stop and ask yourself the following questions:

- Is this likely to happen?
- Is this a rational thought?
- Has this ever happened to me before?
- What's the worst that can happen? Can I handle that?

After you go through the questions, it's time to reframe your thinking. Instead of "I can't walk across that bridge. What if there's an earthquake, and it falls into the water?" tell yourself: "There are people that walk across that bridge every day, and it has never fallen into the water."

### **4. Release the anxiety or anger**

Dehorty recommends getting the emotional energy out with exercise. "Go for a walk or run. [Engaging] in some physical activity [releases] serotonin to help you calm down and feel better."

However, you should avoid physical activity that includes the expression of anger, such as punching walls or screaming.

"This has been shown to increase feelings of anger, as it reinforces the emotions because you end up feeling good as the result of being angry," Dehorty explains.

### **5. Visualize yourself calm**

This tip requires you to practice the breathing techniques you've learned. After taking a few deep breaths, close your eyes and picture yourself calm. See your body relaxed, and imagine yourself working through a stressful or anxiety-causing situation by staying calm and focused.

By creating a mental picture of what it looks like to stay calm, you can refer back to that image when you're anxious.

### **6. Think it through**

Have a mantra to use in critical situations. Just make sure it's one that you find helpful. Dehorty says it can be, "Will this matter to me this time next week?" or "How important is this?" or "Am I going to allow this person/situation to steal my peace?"

This allows the thinking to shift focus, and you can "reality test" the situation.

"When we're anxious or angry, we become hyper-focused on the cause, and rational thoughts leave our mind. These mantras give us an opportunity to allow rational thought to come back and lead to a better outcome," Dehorty explains.

### **7. Listen to music**

The next time you feel your anxiety level cranking up, grab some headphones and tune in to your favorite music. Listening to music can have a very calming effect on your body and mind.

### **8. Change your focus**

Leave the situation, look in another direction, walk out of the room, or go outside.

Dehorty recommends this exercise so you have time for better decision making. "We don't do our best thinking when anxious or angry; we engage in survival thinking. This is fine if our life is really in danger, but if it isn't life threatening, we want our best thinking, not survival instincts," he adds.

### **9. Relax your body**

When you're anxious or angry, it can feel like every muscle in your body is tense (and they probably are). Practicing progressive muscle relaxation can help you calm down and center yourself.

To do this, lie down on the floor with your arms out by your side. Make sure your feet aren't crossed and your hands aren't in fists. Start at your toes and tell yourself to release them. Slowly move up your body, telling yourself to release each part of your body until you get to your head.

#### **10. Write it down**

If you're too angry or anxious to talk about it, grab a journal and write out your thoughts. Don't worry about complete sentences or punctuation — just write. Writing helps you get negative thoughts out of your head.

You can take it one step further and make an action plan to continue staying calm once you're done writing.

#### **11. Get some fresh air**

The temperature and air circulation in a room can increase your anxiety or anger. If you're feeling tense and the space you're in is hot and stuffy, this could trigger a panic attack.

Remove yourself from that environment as soon as possible and go outside — even if it's just for a few minutes.

Not only will the fresh air help calm you down, but also the change of scenery can sometimes interrupt your anxious or angry thought process.

#### **12. Fuel your body**

If you're hungry or not properly hydrated, many of these techniques won't work. That's why it's important to slow down and get something to eat — even if it's just a small snack.

#### **13. Drop your shoulders**

If your body is tense, there's a good chance your posture will suffer. Sit up tall, take a deep breath, and drop your shoulders. To do this, you can focus on bringing your shoulder blades together and then down. This pulls your shoulders down. Take a few deep breaths. You can do this several times a day.

#### **14. Have a centering object**

When you're anxious or angry, so much of your energy is being spent on irrational thoughts. When you're calm, find a "centering object" such as a small stuffed animal, a polished rock you keep in your pocket, or a locket you wear around your neck.

Tell yourself that you're going to touch this object when you're experiencing anxiety or frustration. This centers you and helps calm your thoughts. For example, if you're at work and your boss is making you anxious, gently rub the locket around your neck.

#### **15. Identify pressure points to calm anger and anxiety**

Going for a massage or getting acupuncture is a wonderful way to manage anxiety and anger. But it's not always easy to find time in your day to make it happen. The good news is, you can do acupressure on yourself for instant anxiety relief.

This method involves putting pressure with your fingers or your hand at certain points of the body. The pressure releases the tension and relaxes your body.

One area to start with is the point where the inside of your wrist forms a crease with your hand. Press your thumb on this area for two minutes. This can help relieve tension.

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