



# Close the Stress Cycle

5 ways to complete your stress response

## Why Closing the Cycle Matters

**Stress itself isn't what burns us out.** It's what happens when the stress response never gets closed.

When the body stays "on alert," stress piles up like unfinished homework on your desk. Your nervous system needs a clear signal that says: *"I'm safe now."*

Each of these practices takes just a few minutes — small resets you can do before, during, or after the school day. Think of them as mini-vacations for your nervous system.

## The Science Behind Stress Cycles

Your body is designed to handle stress in cycles — like a wave that builds up and then crashes back down. In nature, animals literally shake off stress after escaping danger. But humans? We often get stuck in the "alert" phase, carrying tension from one moment to the next.

Completing the cycle signals to your nervous system that the threat has passed and it's safe to return to a state of rest and restoration.



- ☐ **Remember:** These aren't just feel-good activities — they're evidence-based practices that literally rewire your stress response. Your future self will thank you for building these habits now.

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# Five Quick Practices



## Move It Out

Brisk walk down the hall, quick stretch, or even 30 seconds of jumping jacks.

**✓ Why it works:** Physical activity completes the biological stress loop.



## Breathe Deep

Inhale through your nose for 4 counts. Exhale slowly for 6 counts. Repeat 3–5 times.

**✓ Why it works:** Long exhales signal safety to the nervous system.



## Laugh or Sing

Share a silly moment with colleagues or sing to your drive-home playlist.

**✓ Why it works:** Sound + joy release tension stored in the body.

## Connect

Take 20 seconds to hug someone you trust or text a colleague: *"Rough day – thinking of you."*

**✓ Why it works:** Social connection tells the body it's not alone in danger.

## Visualize Safety

Close your eyes, picture a place where you feel safe and calm. Spend one full minute breathing with that image.

**✓ Why it works:** Imagination can guide the nervous system back to rest.

**Closing the stress cycle is a daily hygiene habit, like brushing your teeth.** Just one practice a day can keep burnout from building up.

Start small – pick just one technique that resonates with you and try it for a week. Notice how your body feels before and after. Your nervous system will start to trust that relief is always within reach.

