



Downshift to a lower gear, with help from your body *Self-calming methods*

When the emotional intensity is high enough to cloud your judgment, or when your emotions are so shut down that you need to re-connect with the inner you, take a break from the situation and give yourself a chance to calm your mind and body. By doing so you can clear your mind and get yourself back into the driver's seat with your feelings. There are many ways to downshift – different methods work well for different people, so it is helpful to try out several and see which work best for you. First, take some space by walking away from the situation.

- **Soothe the senses**

Calm your five senses (vision, hearing, smell, taste, and touch). For example, look at photos of people, pets, or places you care about, listen to comforting or enjoyable music, light a candle that has a soothing aroma, savor the taste of a favorite food, or focus on the sensation of something with a pleasing feel against your skin, such as a soft blanket or a furry pet, or put a warm towel on your forehead.

- **Do relaxation activities**

For example, take deep breaths while you slowly count to 10. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Or clench your fists or tense the muscles throughout your body as you slowly count to 10, then slowly release. Repeat.

- **Use meditation techniques to focus on being “centered”**

Meditating is simple. Start by finding a quiet, comfortable place to sit. You'll be sitting in this spot for the next 15 - 20 minutes. While you're sitting, close your eyes and silently, slowly repeat a single word or syllable in your mind. Some people repeat a syllable, such as “om.” Other people prefer to repeat a word, such as “peace” or “love.” While you silently repeat your word, it's likely that your mind will wander. That's normal. When you notice your mind wandering, bring your thoughts back to the word you've chosen to repeat. Do this every time your mind starts to wander. After 20 minutes, open your eyes. You will likely feel more relaxed than when you started. Scientists have discovered that meditating regularly is good for the brain and the body because it helps reduce stress.

- **Move your body!**

Head for the gym to shoot baskets, go for a run, or even squeeze a stress ball to release some tensions. Getting exercise is a great way to relax the mind.

- **Act in the opposite way of the emotion**
Sometimes it can be helpful to purposely act in a way that opposes, or is inconsistent with, the upsetting emotion. You can change actions, thoughts, facial expressions, or even body posture. For example, if you feel anxious about socializing at a party, go up and talk with someone at the party with the goal of just chatting for a few minutes and getting one smile from that person. If you feel angry and want to punch someone or something, walk away and do a peaceful activity with your hands (such as drawing or playing your guitar). If you feel depressed and unmotivated to get out of bed, push yourself to go outside or engage in an activity you usually enjoy.
- **Distract yourself with something fun**
Do something fun that competes for your brain's attention. For example, call or text a friend, go for a bike ride, listen to music, or watch a movie you like. Engage with other people to take your mind off what's troubling you.

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