Completing the Stress Cycle

Understanding the difference between a stressor and a the physiological stress reaction it causes can change your entire experience of stress.



Stressors = Events, internal or external, that activate an autonomic stress reaction in your body



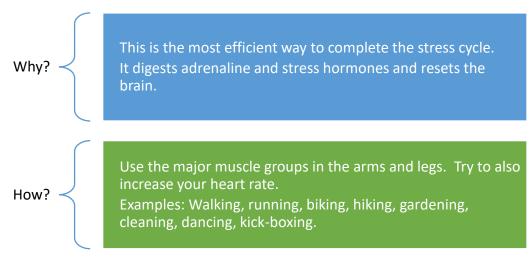
Stress Reaction = Neurological and physiological reactions to encountering a perceived threat

When we approach stress, we often take a problem-solving approach to the stressor. If we recognize our physiological reaction to stress as different than the stressor itself, we can include an approach of completing the stress cycle. When we do this, we gain greater access to our internal resources of intelligence, insight, clarity, wisdom, and compassion in approaching the stressor. We return our bodies and brains to a state where they can think, feel, and respond effectively to the stressor at hand.

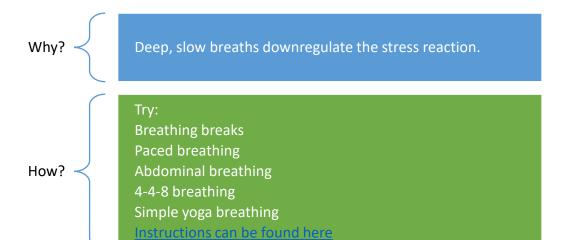
Below are seven ways you can complete the stress cycle – reducing or resolving the physiological reaction itself after a stressor.

For more information, we recommend Burnout: The Secret to Unlocking the Stress Cycle by Drs. Emily and Amelia Nagoski.

1: Physical Activity



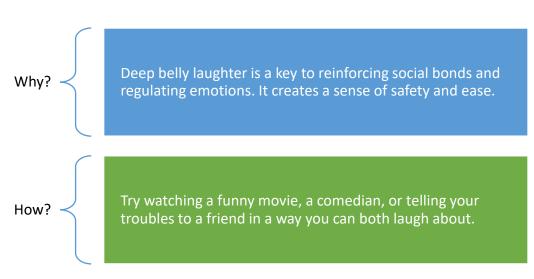
2: Breathing



3: Positive Social Interaction



4: Laughter



5: Affection



The Drs. Nagoski share, "When friendly chit-chat with colleagues doesn't cut it, and you're too stressed out for laughter, deeper connection with a loving presence is called for"

How?

Try "hugging until relaxed." Hug a loved one for 20 seconds or until you both relax, while both of you are standing in your center of balance.

Spend time petting your pet.

6: Creative Self-Expression



Creativity provides a context where big emotions can be externalized and integrated.

How?

Try: painting, writing, drawing, crafting, or cooking. Use your imagination to create a alternative endings to your stressors – including ones that make you laugh.

7: Cry



The physiological release of crying can be an important completion to a stress reaction. Crying releases the stress hormones accumulated in the stress reaction.

How? -

Try crying without focusing on the story related to the stressor, but simply paying gentle, kind attention to the sensations in the body.