

How Can I...Keep My Cool?

“Sometimes my stress catches up with me, and I feel like I might melt down. It even gets hard to breathe. What can I do in the moment to stay calm?”

—Luis, 17, is a *Choices* Teen Adviser and high school senior in Houston, Texas



THIS MONTH'S EXPERT

George Mumford has taught basketball legends like Kobe Bryant about something called mindfulness—a tactic that can help you stay calm and focused in the present moment. It can help with everything from school stress to performing while the whole world is watching!

“We always have the ability to choose our response to stress.”

This wise advice from sports psychologist George Mumford is crucial when our brain goes into stress mode. “Being overwhelmed is like having a computer virus,” he says. “The anxiety replicates until your ‘computer’ freezes.” So how can you stop yourself from short-circuiting? Easy: Choose to focus on the present moment . . . not what happened at soccer practice earlier, or what’s going to happen during your chem test tomorrow.



Here’s how:

1. Redirect.

Sitting in a comfortable position, place a palm on your belly. As you breathe in, imagine it as a pink balloon filling up with air...and then emptying out as you exhale. It sounds silly, but it gets your brain to refocus on the here and now.

2. Refresh.

Take 10 big, full breaths. For each one, open your mouth and inhale until your belly expands—then exhale. Concentrate on the sensations of breathing and imagine that balloon.

3. Refocus.

Now that you’ve halted the stress response, your brain is better primed to come up with a creative solution to the problems you’re facing, like a plan of attack for your pile of homework!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kk71BwuhXWM&feature=emb_title