

# Staying Calm

When we begin to feel anxious or panicked, we can have a sensation of 'racing thoughts' where our minds struggle to focus and these thoughts seem to spiral out of all control. The following tips are ways we can stay calm when this starts happening. Through applying these tips, we begin to regain control over the pace of our thoughts and the calmness of our minds.

## Take Two Minutes

When our thoughts are escalated, we often find we breathe quicker and we feel a sense of panic within our own body. By taking two minutes to literally stop everything and just sit still we can help to slow our bodies down and this can, in turn, slow our thought processes down. It can be useful to practise this each day as a part of our wellbeing, as well as at times of experiencing anxiety.

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## Just Breathe

During your 'Take Two Minutes', focus on your breathing. Make sure you are breathing in for a count of one and breathing out for a count of two. This can help to challenge the fight or flight response triggered by anxious thoughts and feelings.

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## Acknowledge the Anxiety

By acknowledging the very fact that you are feeling anxious, you immediately achieve an element of control and assertiveness over the anxious feelings. While being told to 'calm down' is not necessarily as straightforward as that, consciously recognising the feelings of anxiety and addressing them with acceptance can trigger a calm and thoughtful response from you.

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## Picture Success

Spend time focusing on how different life will feel when these anxious thoughts and feelings have passed. Allow yourself to visualise and imagine what you will be doing, how you will feel, what you can see, what you can hear and what you can smell. By picturing this, your mind starts to see this as a reality and is already on the path towards that calm place.

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## Use Music for Mood

Music has a very powerful impact on our mood and our thoughts. We can use music within our classroom to create our own identity within the school. It also allows you to choose songs or artists who you know will positively impact your thoughts and feelings. This could be during the school day (your class may well benefit from music in a similar way) or outside of school hours.

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### Write Your Thoughts Down

By writing your thoughts down, you can allow your mind to 'put them to one side' while you do something else. This may be sleeping, seeing friends or completing tasks at school. You can then return to the thoughts and feelings at a later point when you are ready to focus on them. You may find that by writing them down you have offloaded the thoughts to an extent where they already seem less controlling over your mind and mood.

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### Go Outside

We can often convince ourselves, as teachers, that we can't possibly leave the classroom. When we experience anxiety and have our class with us, or even at the end of the day, we can convince ourselves that we have to stay confined to the classroom. The reality is we, as teachers, are in charge. We can take our class outside to learn, especially if it benefits our wellbeing. Equally, a five-minute working break at the end of the day for some fresh air can immediately change our perspective and enhance our wellbeing. The positive impact this has makes us far more productive. It may be that difficult meetings might work better if they were a 'walk and talk' style meeting or where a walk is arranged for immediately after the meeting or before the meeting.

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### Take Care of You

Make sure you are eating the right nutrients and exercising to allow your body to physically be well. When your body is strong, it gives your mind a shift in focus as well as improving your mood. It can also help support your posture and ensure you avoid physically tense positions which exaggerate your anxious thoughts.

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### Reach Out

Talk to other people about how you are feeling. You will find more people relate to your feelings than you might believe and that people will want to support and help you. By having someone else to talk things through with, you can offload and process your thoughts differently. This can allow others, or yourself, to directly challenge any of your negative thoughts and work towards a sensible solution.

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