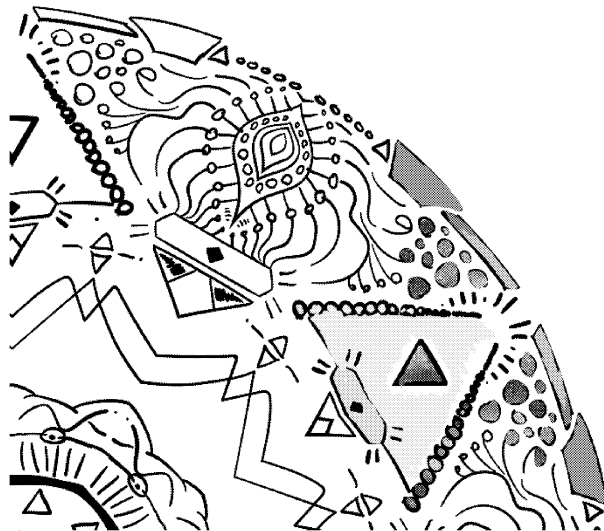


# SHEPODY HEALING CENTRE



## Coping Strategies for Managing Stress

## A Self-Help Booklet

Developed by: Gisele Craswell,  
Occupational Therapist

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The purpose of this booklet is to provide you with some strategies that can assist you with managing stress. However, it does not replace the services of your treatment team. Also, if you are experiencing significant distress and/or having thoughts of suicide or self-injury, please talk to staff without delay.

You will notice that there are Mandalas for you to color all throughout this booklet. Coloring Mandalas can be very relaxing and help you practice mindfulness. Try different color schemes and get creative with your artwork.

## What is stress?

Stress is something we all experience. It is what we feel when we are under pressure, or when we believe that we do not have the resources to meet the demands of a situation. I am sure you are familiar with that feeling of “fight or flight” when experiencing high stress or danger; things like rapid heart rate, shakiness, facial flushing, clammy hands, and muscle tension that accompany hormone release as a response to stress. This response is normal and very helpful in the short-term when protecting us from real danger, because it keeps us alert and ready for action. However, many of our stressors are not related to immediate or real dangers, and we can end up experiencing prolonged periods of stress, which can lead to physical and emotional health issues.

Headaches, depression, aggressive behavior, irritability, gastrointestinal issues, difficulty with sleep, and low energy are common symptoms of high and/or prolonged stress.

Have you ever found yourself saying things like...

“My mind is always racing.... I just can’t relax”.

“It’s one crisis after another. I just keep expecting something else to go wrong”.

“I have way too much on my plate!”

“With every demand, I feel more and more tired and irritable”

If you can relate to some of the symptoms and thoughts noted above, stress may be a problem in your life. This booklet will help you learn more about stress and outline different strategies that can be used for managing stress.

## Signs of Stress

### STRESS SYMPTOMS CHECKLIST

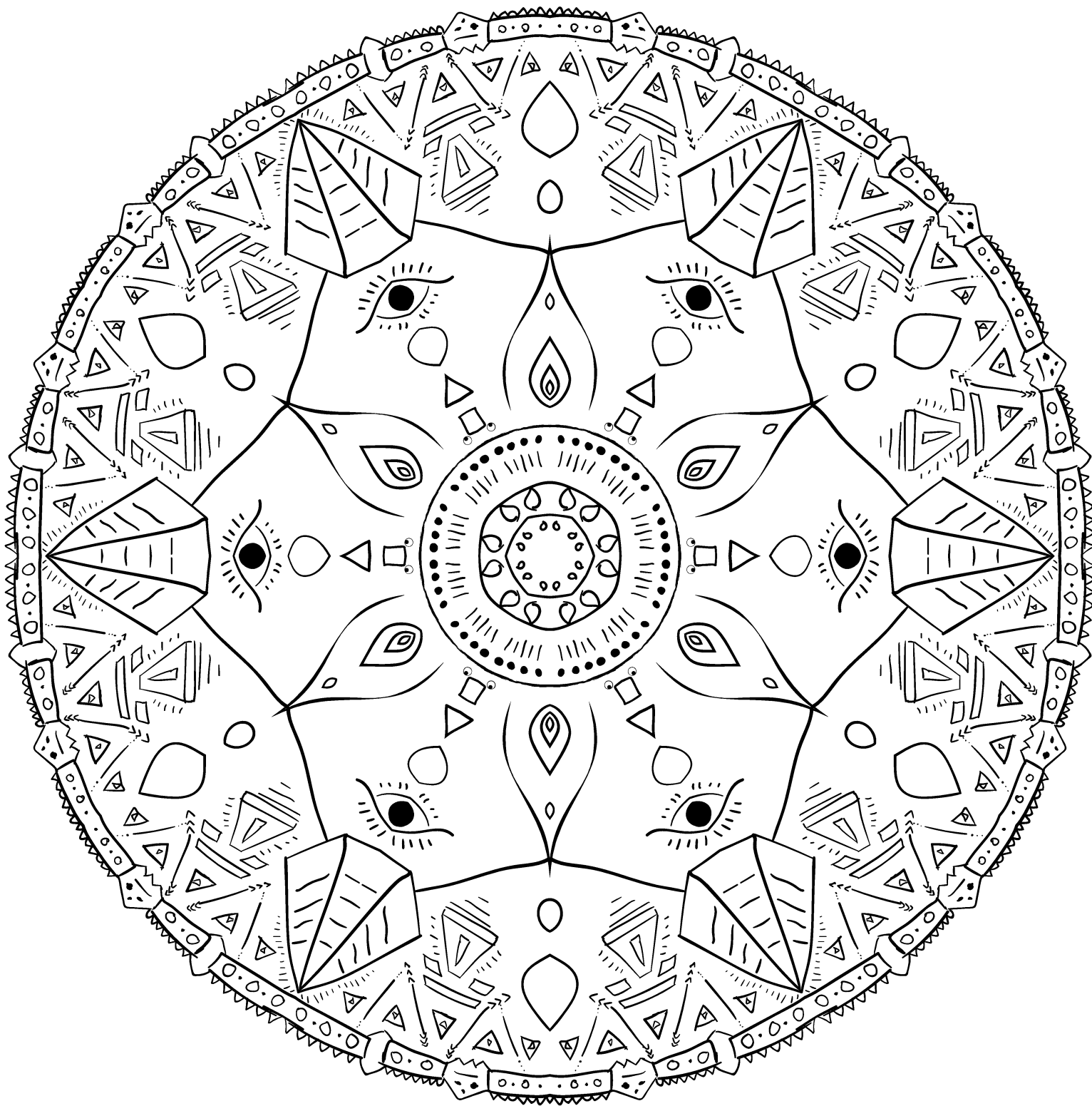
This section comes from the “Manage Stress Workbook” designed by the National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP) and freely available on the internet at [https://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/ManageStressWorkbook\\_Dec2013.pdf](https://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/ManageStressWorkbook_Dec2013.pdf)

When you know how your body responds to stressors, you can focus your attention on finding the best stress management technique for each one. Check off the symptoms you experience when you’re feeling a lot of stress.

|                        |                         |                                 |
|------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Backache               | Fatigue                 | Upset stomach/nausea            |
| Chest pain             | Lack of energy          | Blaming                         |
| Chest tightness        | Muscle cramps/spasms    | Anxiety/worry                   |
| Digestive issues       | Neck & shoulder pain    | Forgetfulness                   |
| Sexual issues          | Pain in general         | Lack of motivation              |
| Muscle tension         | Sleep problems          | Loneliness                      |
| Headache               | Smoking more than usual | Depression/Sadness              |
| Heart palpitations     | Teeth grinding          | Crying                          |
| Eating when not hungry | Frustration             | Irritability/Anger              |
| Restlessness           | Shakiness               | Difficulty with attention/focus |
| Racing thoughts        |                         |                                 |
|                        |                         |                                 |

**NOTE:** Some of these symptoms can indicate a medical problem rather than stress. If you are experiencing any unusual symptoms or symptoms that are severe enough to prevent you from engaging in your daily activities, contact your healthcare team right away.

On the next page is your first mandala to color. Take this time to focus on your color choices and let the motion of coloring help you relax.



## Sources of Stress

What is stressful to one person may not be stressful to another. We all interpret situations differently, and this can even change at different points throughout our lives. It can also depend on the coping strategies and resources that we have at any given time. Sometimes our stressors are external, like major life events, loss of a loved one, imprisonment, debt, and relationship issues. Sometimes our stressors are internal, like worrisome thoughts, negative thinking, intrusive thoughts, flashbacks, and chronic pain.

What are your stress triggers? Look at the list below and check off those that trigger stress and anxiety for you. There are sections left blank for you to add any that are not listed.

|   |                                    |  |
|---|------------------------------------|--|
| Spending too much time alone            | Spending too much time with others | Lack of clear direction                |
| Not enough external stimulation/boredom | Too many external distractions     | Perceived unfairness                   |
| Feeling rushed                          | Worrisome thoughts                 | Interacting with authority figures     |
| Conflict with others                    | Not having values respected        | Locked in cell/lock downs              |
| Being too busy                          | Children and family                | Debt                                   |
| Health issues                           | Perfectionism                      | Opinions/expectations of others        |
| Uncertainty                             | Negative self-talk                 | Bullying                               |
| Harassment                              | Negative conversations             | Unrealistic demands                    |
| Incarceration                           | Loss of a relationship             | Traumatic event                        |
| Community release                       | Pain/fatigue                       | World events (war/economy/environment) |
| Intrusive thoughts                      | Flashbacks                         |  |
|   |                                    |  |

## Tracking Your Stress

This section comes from the “Manage Stress Workbook” designed by the National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP) and freely available on the internet at [https://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/ManageStressWorkbook\\_Dec2013.pdf](https://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/ManageStressWorkbook_Dec2013.pdf)

**Rate your stress level** regularly by choosing a number between 0-10, where 1 means not bothersome, 5 means somewhat bothersome, and 10 means very bothersome. Tracking your stress will help you identify patterns in your stress.

**Stress RULER**

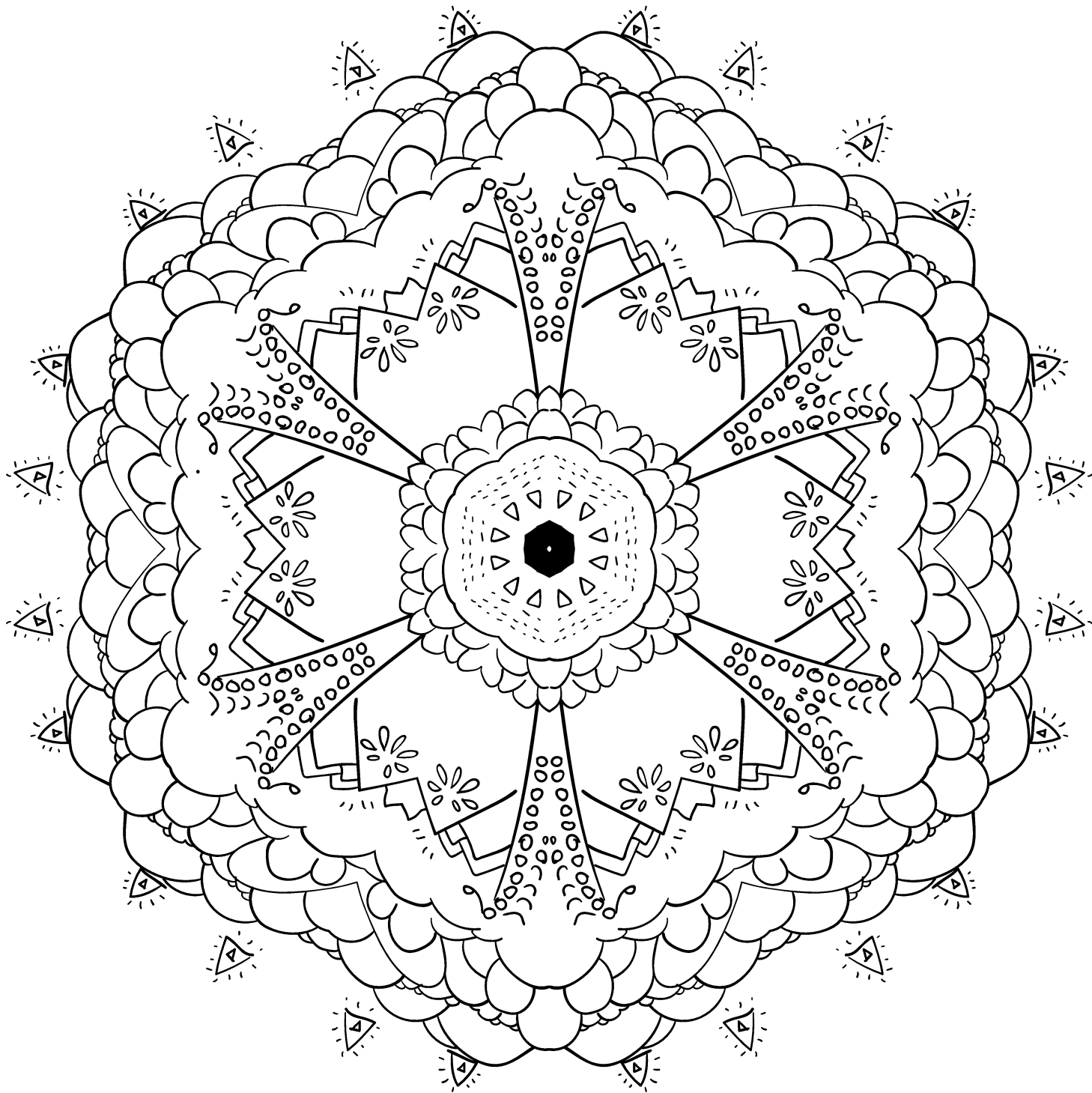
*“On a scale of 0 – 10, how bothersome has your stress been?”*

|                          |          |                        |          |                        |          |                    |          |                         |          |           |
|--------------------------|----------|------------------------|----------|------------------------|----------|--------------------|----------|-------------------------|----------|-----------|
| <b>0</b>                 | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b>               | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b>               | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b>           | <b>7</b> | <b>8</b>                | <b>9</b> | <b>10</b> |
| Not at All<br>Bothersome |          | A Little<br>Bothersome |          | Somewhat<br>Bothersome |          | Very<br>Bothersome |          | Extremely<br>Bothersome |          |           |

When you notice your stress rising, you should practice your favorite stress management techniques before your stress levels get too high.

| Date and Time | Stress Level (0-10) | What was I doing | What was I thinking |
|---------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|
|               |                     |                  |                     |
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|               |                     |                  |                     |

In your next Mandala, see if you can add some geometric designs of your own in the drawing.



## How Can We Manage Stress In Our Body?

We talked earlier about the stress response, which is largely in our bodies. As such, learning strategies to help switch off the physical signs of stress can be very helpful. You have probably already heard about deep breathing, but did you know it is one of the fastest ways to deal with stress in the moment?

### DEEP BREATHING EXERCISE

This section comes from the "Manage Stress Workbook" designed by the National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP) and freely available on the internet at [https://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/ManageStressWorkbook\\_Dec2013.pdf](https://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/ManageStressWorkbook_Dec2013.pdf)

1. Start by sitting down in a comfortable place that's free from distraction. Uncross your legs, put both feet on the floor, and rest your hands in your lap. Pay attention to how this position feels and let your mind and body just 'be' for a few moments.
2. Close your eyes and notice the pattern of your breath as you inhale and exhale. It may be soft or loud, slow or quick, or shallow or deep. Make a mental note of your breath before you start relaxing with deep breathing. Just breathe naturally for a few moments, taking slow and deep breaths in through your nose and then breathing out through your mouth.
3. Now hold your breath for a few seconds after you inhale, and for another few seconds after you exhale. Continue breathing in this rhythm for a few moments.
4. Breathe naturally for a moment. Now place both of your hands on top of your stomach and try to notice how your belly rises with each inhale and falls with each exhale. Notice your breath moving in and out again from your belly, to your chest, and gently out through your mouth. Continue breathing naturally.
5. This time say, "Relax" silently or aloud after each time you exhale.

**Repeat this exercise for 1 to 5 minutes.**

## How Can We Manage Stress In Our Body?

We can also use our senses to help us relax. Here are some examples of sensory strategies that people tend to find calming. Check off those that are helpful to you, or that you would like to try.

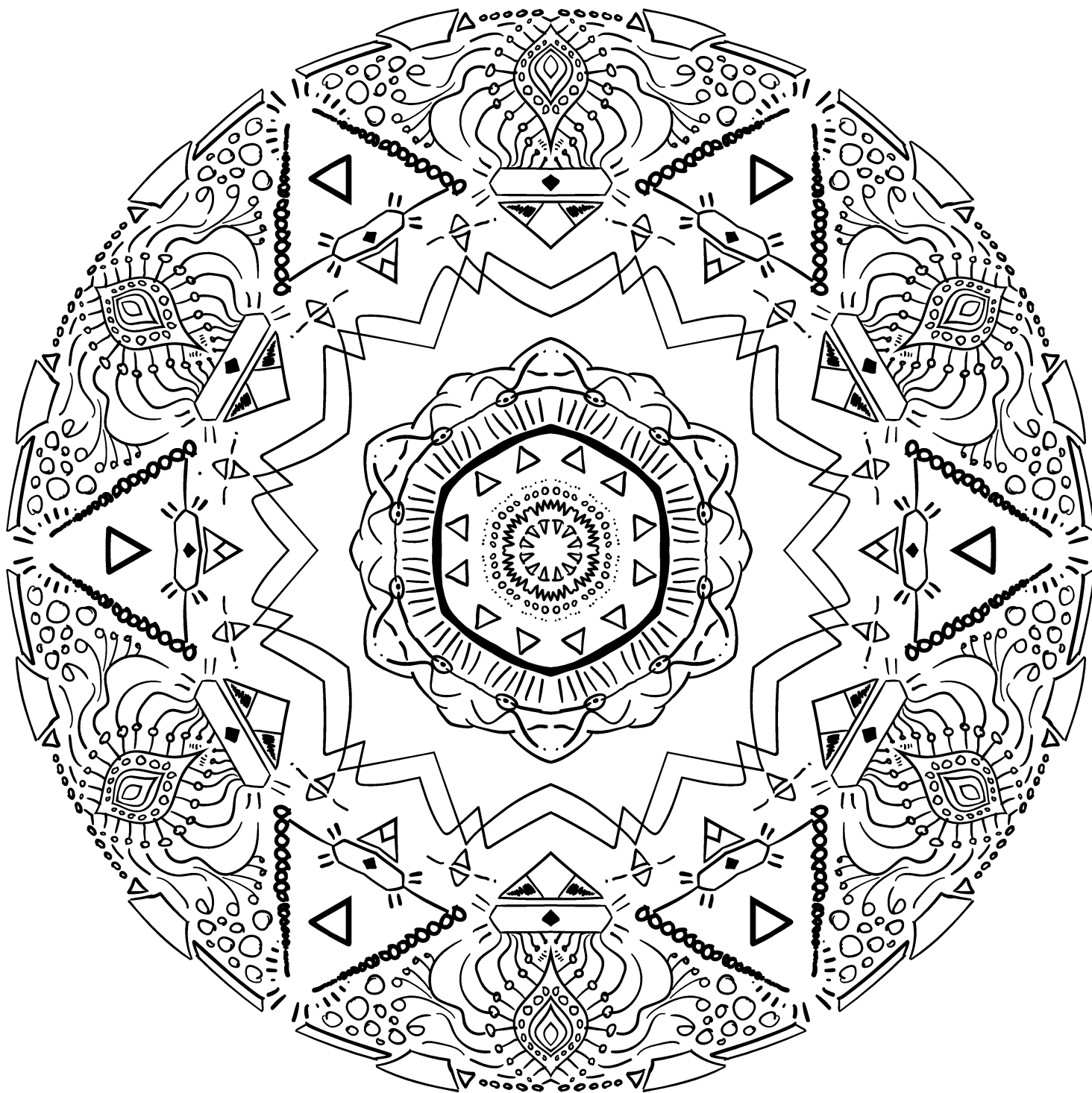
|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Massage*                                       | Squeezing a stress ball                            | Heavy blankets or other weighted items                                    |
| Hugs**   | Warmth   | Use of hand lotions   |
| Calisthenics (push-ups, sit ups, planks, etc.) | Walking  | Weight lifting  |
| Tai Chi  | Yoga   | Labour work (lifting, pushing, pulling)                                   |
| Slow dancing                                   | Slow head rolls                                    | Rocking in a rocking chair  |
| Pleasant smells                                | Lavender essential oil                             | Chamomile or sleepy time tea or other hot drinks that are not caffeinated |
| Serene paintings                               | Nature scenes                                      | Soft colors   |
| Natural lighting                               | Watching fish in an aquarium                       | Clean and sparsely furnished room   |
| Singing  | Listening to relaxation music                      | Listening to guided meditation tapes                                      |
| Listening to nature sounds                     | Familiar background noise, like the sound of a fan | Repetitive sounds like ocean waves or drumming                            |
| Smudging                                       | Looking at picture books                           | Bean bag tapping  |

\*Did you know that you can use a stress ball to self-massage? You can even place it behind you on a wall and use it to massage your back.

\*\* Did you know that you can give yourself a hug by wrapping yourself with stretchy material (like gym pants) and squeezing it around your upper body?

At Shepody, we have a sensory room with relaxing furniture, calming nature images, and relaxing music, as well as other sensory items. Let a staff member know if you would like to try our sensory room.

Are you ready for your next Mandala? Try a different color scheme this time and see what you think. Don't forget to focus on your coloring and let the motion help you relax.



## How Can We Manage Stress In Our Body?

Progressive muscle relaxation is another useful strategy to relax the body.

### PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

This section comes from the "Manage Stress Workbook" designed by the National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP) and freely available on the internet at [https://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/ManageStressWorkbook\\_Dec2013.pdf](https://www.prevention.va.gov/MPT/2013/docs/ManageStressWorkbook_Dec2013.pdf)

*Progressive Muscle Relaxation exercises will help you recognize when your muscles are tense and teach you how to return your muscles to a relaxed state.*

1. Breathe normally and let your body just 'be'. Take note of how your body feels from your toes to your head. Does any of your body feel tense, stiff, or achy?
2. Close your eyes and notice how your toes feel. Tightly curl your toes to the point where you feel tension, as if trying to squeeze a small ball between your toes and the ball of your feet. Hold this toe curl for 10 seconds. Release your curl and let your toes spread. Notice how your toes feel when they are free from tension.
3. Next, repeat this cycle of tensing and relaxing with your calves. Next, do your thighs. Move up the body. Repeat with your hands, then arms, and then the muscles of your upper back and shoulders. Finally, tense and relax your neck and face.
4. After you complete tensing and relaxing each muscle in the body, breathe in through your nose and hold your breath for 5 seconds. Slowly and gently breathe out through your mouth. Open your eyes and notice how your muscles---your feet, calves, thighs, fists, arms, upper back, neck, and face---feel when relaxed.

## How Can We Manage Stress In Our Body?

Did you know that physical activity is one of the most effective stress management strategies?

We often think of exercise as strengthening our muscles, heart, and lungs, which it does do, but it also helps our nervous system and mental health. Physical activity also increases endorphins, improves sleep, releases muscle tension, and can be an effective intervention for depression.

### So let's get moving!

According to the Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology; [csepguidelines.ca](http://csepguidelines.ca)), adults between the ages of 18-64, and older adults (65+) should have an accumulation of **at least 150 minutes** of moderate to vigorous activity **per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more**. However, it is important to build up slowly to that level of activity, especially if you are just starting to be physically active. Also, it is important to consult with a healthcare professional if you have any issues that may impact your ability to engage in physical activity.

For stress relief, moderate physical activity would be recommended over vigorous physical activity. Examples of exercise that can be very helpful for stress management include brisk walking, bicycling, yoga, and tai chi.

How might becoming more physically active benefit you?

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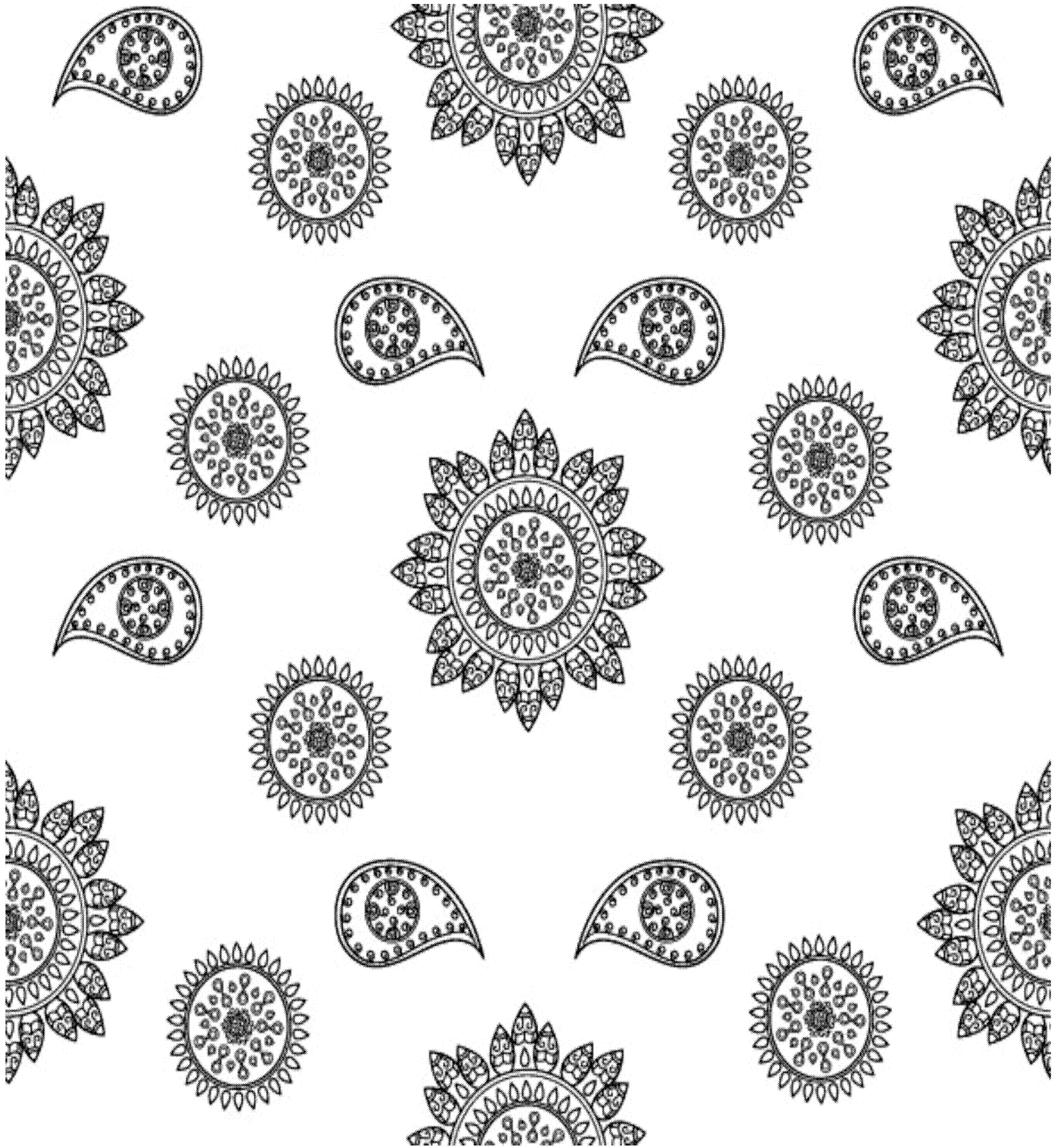
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In your next coloring sheet, try using a particular color scheme, such as cool colors (greens, blues, and purples) or warm colors (reds, oranges, and yellows).



## How Can We Manage Stress In Our Body?

Visualization, or imagery, is another strategy that can help put your body in a more relaxed state. One common way to use imagery is to close your eyes and imagine being in a place that is peaceful and relaxing to you. It may be a place you have been before, or one you create in your mind. Use all your senses to make the experience more effective. For example, if you are imagining a beach scene, in addition to the visual images, you will want to imagine hearing the sound of the waves and/or seagulls, the smell and taste of the salt air, the feeling of a light breeze and/or the warm sun on your skin, the feeling of the sand between your toes, etc.

Some people find it difficult to use their imaginations, but find guided imagery exercises helpful.

You will find an example of a guided imagery exercise below:

source: [https://www.mirecc.va.gov/cih-visn2/Documents/Patient Education Handouts/Visualization Guided Imagery 2013.pdf](https://www.mirecc.va.gov/cih-visn2/Documents/Patient%20Education%20Handouts/Visualization%20Guided%20Imagery%202013.pdf)

### **The Private Garden**

Close your eyes. Allow yourself to get comfortable.....Begin with a few slow deep breaths in through your nose and out through your mouth, letting your body get relaxed. Let the chair fully support your body as you continue to breath and relax.

Now, use your imagination to picture yourself walking slowly along a path. It's a pleasant path, any kind that you wish. It's a beautiful day,

## The Private Garden

and you feel relaxed and happy. You can feel the warmth and energy of the sunlight on your skin.....Soon you come to a gate. You know this gate leads to a special place where you feel welcomed, safe, and comfortable. Push the gate open and allow yourself to enter your very own private garden.

Your garden is filled with your favorite things. Whatever is pleasing to you can be found in this place. Perhaps there are flowers, trees, animals, birds, water, or even music. Look around and notice what is in your garden.....See all the colors and objects that are in this place. Notice how beautiful they are..... Look at the various shapes and see how varied they are.....Look at the ground, look at the sky, and see where they meet.....Your garden is calm and tranquil. Everything peacefully co-exists in the garden.....As you are looking, become aware of how things might feel in this private place of yours. Begin to explore this place with your sense of touch. Perhaps some things are soft and warm, and others are smooth and cool. Simply spend some time exploring, using your sense of touch as you continue to feel at peace and comfortable... Notice what the air feels like; is it cool or warm?.... Is there a breeze or is it still?..... Take the time to feel the peace and serenity in this private place.....

As you continue to explore your garden by seeing and feeling, become aware of the sounds that you hear in your garden.....The sounds in your garden are pleasing to the ear and very comforting. Perhaps it is quiet in your garden, or maybe there are a number of sounds. Some of the sounds may be very soft, while others may be louder. Relax and listen for a while and see if you can identify the different sounds in your garden..... As you're listening to the sounds in your garden, become aware of what smells you might smell. Take a deep breath in, and notice the fragrances that are present. Some of them may be familiar, while others may be unfamiliar. The fragrances are pleasant and soothing.....Take your time and enjoy your visit to the garden, using it in whatever way that you wish. Spend the time that is necessary for you to rejuvenate and to care for yourself.....

## The Private Garden

When you are ready to leave, slowly walk back towards the gate of your garden. You have enjoyed your visit to the garden and feel relaxed and content. This good feeling will remain with you throughout the day. Push the gate open and return to the path that led you to the garden. As you make your way back up the path to the here and now, remember that you can use your imagination to return to your private garden at any time you wish. Visit your garden any time you would like to relax, to be comforted, or just to enjoy its beauty.....You are now ready to resume your day. Stretch gently and open your eyes, feeling refreshed and alert.



## How Can We Manage Stress In Our Body?

Another important stress management strategy is **healthy eating**, and monitoring how we feel after consuming food and beverages. Have you ever noticed feeling jittery when you drink too much coffee, fatigued when you have not consumed enough water, or experienced an energy crash after having high sugar foods? The food and beverages we consume can have a big impact on how our bodies and minds feel. Eating unhealthy diets can negatively impact our body's ability to manage stress, and actually, eating unhealthy, in and of itself, is a form of stress on the body. Like a car, your body needs the proper fuel and fluids to work properly.

Canada's Food Guide (<https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/healthy-food-choices/>) recommends the following:

- Make it a habit to eat a variety of healthy foods each day.
- Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits, whole grain foods and protein foods. Choose protein foods that come from plants more often.
- Choose foods with healthy fats instead of saturated fat.
- Limit highly processed foods. If you choose these foods, eat them less often and in small amounts.
- Prepare meals and snacks using ingredients that have little to no added sodium, sugars or saturated fat.
- Choose healthier menu options when eating out.
- Make water your drink of choice.
- Replace sugary drinks with water.
- Use food labels.
- Be aware that food marketing can influence your choices.

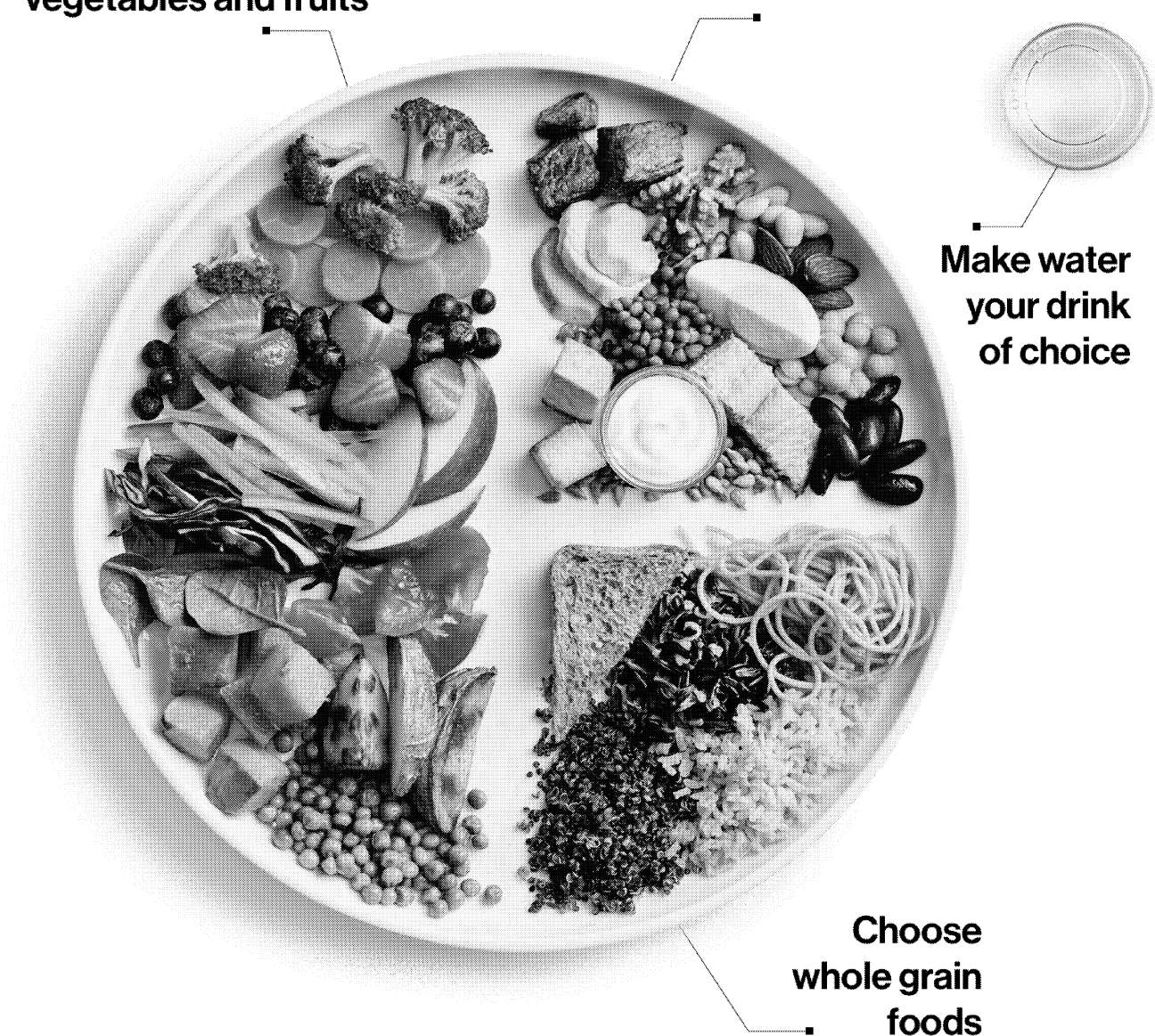
## HEALTHY EATING (Canada's Food Guide)

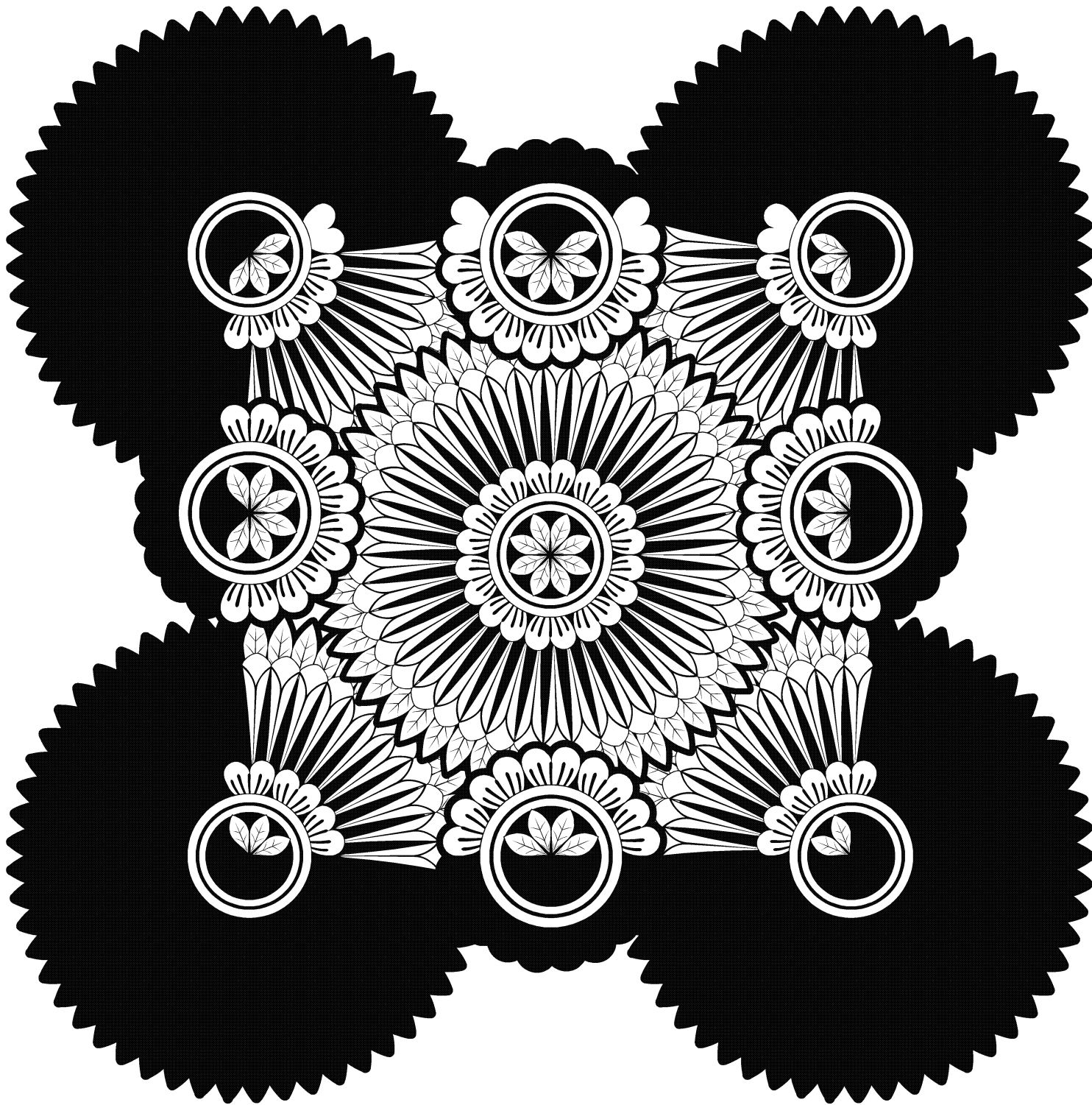
**Have plenty of  
vegetables and fruits**

**Eat protein foods**

**Make water  
your drink  
of choice**

**Choose  
whole grain  
foods**





## Mindfulness

“Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment, through a gentle, nurturing lens. Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there’s a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we’re sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.”

<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition>

Since Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction was introduced at the University of Massachusetts’ medical school in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn, there has been much research conducted demonstrating its benefits when regularly practiced. Some of the benefits are physical (e.g., demonstrating improvements in immune system function; improving sleep quality), some are mental (e.g., reducing negative emotions, stress, and depression), some are cognitive (e.g. suggestion that it improves attention and memory).<https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition>

Some important components of practicing mindfulness include:

1. **Paying close attention to your breathing.** It is normal for your thoughts to wander when focusing on your breath. When this happens, simply acknowledge the thought and bring your awareness back to your breath.
2. **Paying attention to your senses.** Really noticing what is around you; what you are seeing, hearing, smelling in any given moment. Even a blade of grass can be beautiful when we take the time to focus our attention on it.
3. **Recognizing that thoughts are just thoughts and they are fleeting.** Your thoughts do not define you, and you do not have to get caught up in them. You can just acknowledge the thought and watch it move away, like a cloud in the sky or a leaf on a river.

## Mindfulness

**4. Tune into your body's physical sensations, noticing what you are feeling in any given moment, without judging it or trying to change it.** The Body Scan is a common practice where you bring your attention to different parts of your body in turn, from head to toe.

### BODY SCAN

(Script from Anxiety Canada; [https://anxietycanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Body\\_Scan.pdf](https://anxietycanada.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Body_Scan.pdf))

Lie down in a comfortable place like a carpeted floor, mat or bed. Although you may feel sleepy or your mind may drift while doing this exercise, the goal is to try and remain alert and aware of the present moment.

Gently close your eyes. Let your shoulders drop down and away from your ears. Bring your attention to your breathing. Breathe in...and out...and just allow your self to continue to breathe naturally.

The aim of this exercise is to bring awareness to the physical sensations in different parts of your body. Your mind is probably used to labelling these sensations as good or pleasurable; or bad, uncomfortable, or even painful. For this exercise, see if you are able to just notice what you feel without judgment-for example, do you notice tingling, warmth, pulsating, tightness, or other sensations. Again, it's not about whether these sensations are good or bad, it's just about noticing them.

Continue to breathe at your own pace, allowing each breath to come as it may, without any conscious effort to change your breathing. Notice your lungs slowly fill with air when you breathe in and deflate when you breathe out.

Now, bring your awareness to where your body makes contact with the floor, mat or bed. On each outbreath, allow yourself to let go, to sink a little deeper into the surface below you.

## **BODY SCAN (cont'd)**

Scan your left foot for any sensations. Simply become aware of them. Scan your left calf. Notice and allow any sensations that may be present. Scan slowly, up through your thigh now. Allow yourself to feel any and all sensations. If you don't feel anything at the moment, that's okay. Just allow yourself to "not" feel anything.

If you do become aware of tension, or other intense sensations in a particular part of your body, see if you can "breathe in" to it-using the in-breath to bring a gentle awareness to the sensations present in your body, without trying to change them.

Now, scan for any sensation in your right foot, your calf, and thigh. Simply notice all sensations and feel what is happening. Continue to bring awareness, and a gentle curiosity to the sensations in your right leg.

The mind will inevitably wander away from the breath and the body from time to time, which is normal. When you notice your mind has wandered, gently acknowledge it, and then return your attention to the part of the body you intended to focus on.

Now focus on your stomach. Feel it rising as you breathe in. Sinking as you exhale. Nice and slow. Your heart rate may slow down. This is normal. Remain aware of your stomach, your breath. Breathe in...and out... Continue to notice any sensations in your stomach area.

Now scan for any sensations in your left hand and arm. Simply become aware of the different sensations and feel what is happening. Continue to bring awareness, and a gentle curiosity to the sensations. Again, if you don't feel anything at the moment, that's okay.

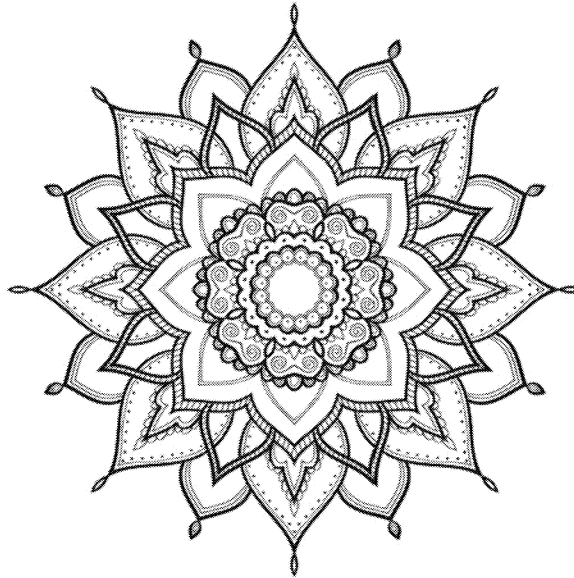
Scan for any sensations in your right hand and arm. Continue to bring awareness, and a gentle curiosity to the sensations.

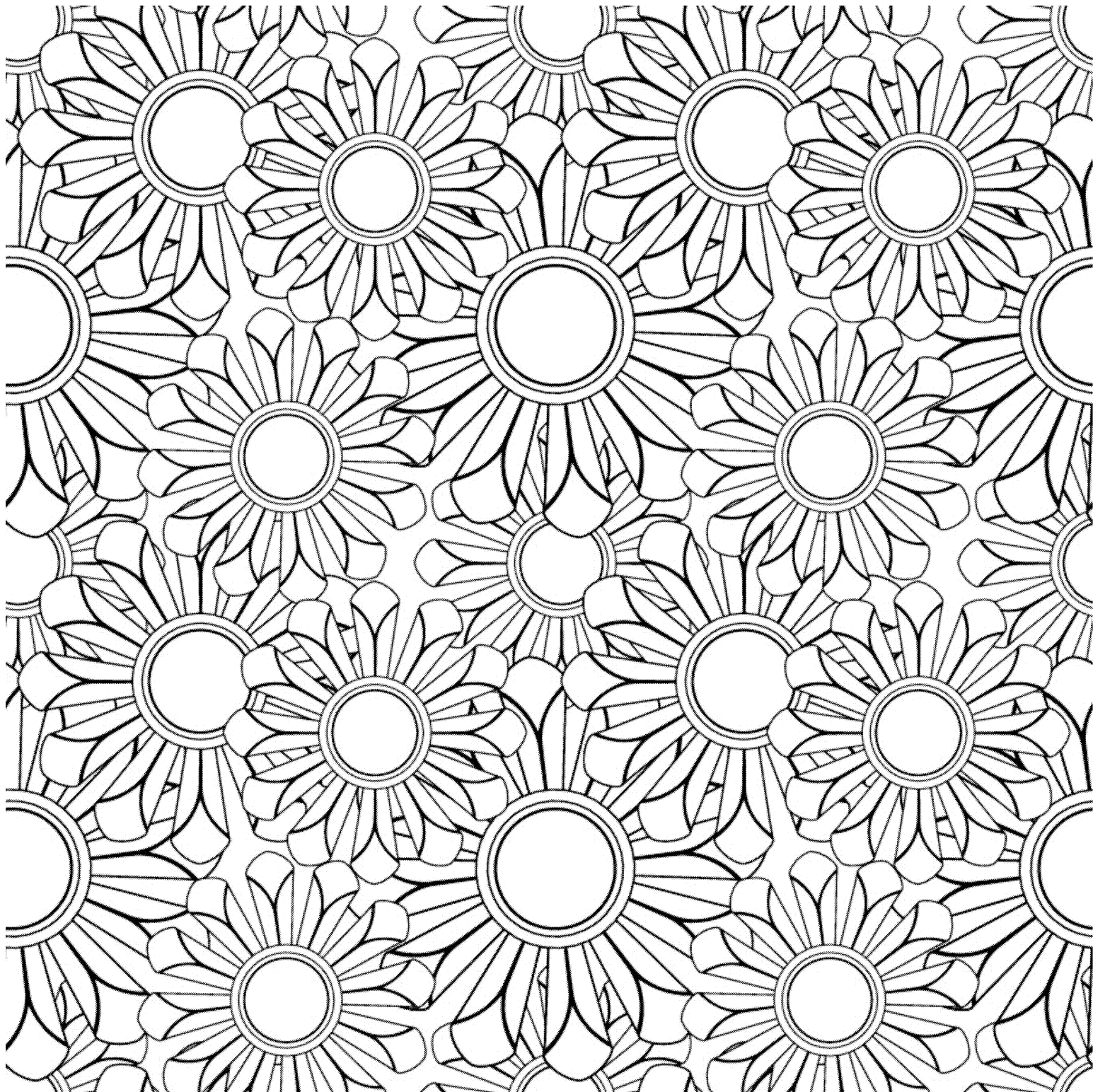
## **BODY SCAN (cont'd)**

Come back up to your chest. Continue scanning up along your neck, and to your face. Feel the sensations in your jaw, and your throat. Notice how the back of your head rests against the surface under you. Bring your awareness to the top of your head.

Now, take a moment to notice how all your body parts are connected. Let any sensations come to you. Just notice what kind of sensation it is-tingling, warmth, coolness, heaviness, floating. Accept whatever sensation there is as just that, a sensation that will arise and slowly and gradually change. It is just another part of you.

Continue to focus on your breathing for as long as you like. When you are ready, slowly open your eyes and bring your attention back to your surroundings.





## Self-Talk or Automatic Thoughts

It is important to listen to what we say to ourselves as we respond to events. This is called self-talk, and it has a big impact on our moods, emotions, feelings, behavior, physical functioning, and additional thoughts (Thorn, 2017). When we change the way we talk to ourselves, we can actually change the way we feel (Caudill, 2002).

It's important to know that much of our negative self-talk is not accurate. In fact, negative thinking tends to distort events by exaggerating them, catastrophizing them, using all or nothing kind of thinking, and/or filtering things with a negative lens. When we think this way, we come to see the external world as being to blame for our suffering, and lose focus on what we have control over and can change.

Our automatic thoughts can be very unhelpful to us, so if we don't learn to notice and challenge the thoughts, they can have a big impact on how we feel and what we do. Here are some common automatic thoughts (adapted from Thorn, 2017, p. 154), which are sometimes referred to as distorted thinking or unhelpful thinking styles. Which ones can you relate to?

| Category                   | Definition  | Example   |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| All-or-nothing thinking    | Viewing a situation as two distinct categories rather than on a continuum- "black-versus-white" thinking. | "They didn't help me with my paperwork, so they are useless."   |
| Fortunetelling             | Predicting the future negatively without considering other possible outcomes.                             | "I'm not going to succeed in the community. I am going to end up back here."  |
| Disqualifying the positive | Telling oneself that positive experiences don't count.  | "The boss said I am a good employee, but they probably tell that to everyone."  |
| Emotional reasoning        | Assuming that because one feels or believes something so strongly, it must be true.                       | "I can just feel my bones grinding together when I move. I don't care what the physical therapist says; it can't be good for me to do those exercises." |

## Self-Talk or Automatic Thoughts

| Category                   | Definition  | Example  |
|----------------------------|---|--|
| Labeling                   | Attaching a global, extreme, negative label to oneself or others.                                     | "All doctors are uncaring jerks!"  |
| Magnification/minimization | Magnifying the negative or minimizing the positive.   | "The relaxation exercises help relieve my stress for a little bit, but what's the use? I'm stressed out the rest of the time." |
| Mental filter              | Paying undue attention to a single negative detail instead of seeing the whole picture.               | "When I walk, I get tired out. I don't see how that's supposed to be good for you!"  |
| Mind reading               | Believing that one knows what others are thinking.  | "The nurses think I am exaggerating how bad I feel."   |
| Overgeneralization         | Making global negative conclusions that go well beyond the current situation.                         | "Now that I have a criminal record, I'll never be able to get a good job".   |
| Personalization            | Seeing oneself as the cause of negative external events for which one is not necessarily responsible. | "This illness is a punishment from God for something I did wrong."   |

Once we learn what kind of unhelpful thinking styles we tend to use, it is important for us to do some evidence testing, so we can be more objective about our thoughts. By asking ourselves questions to look for other information, rather than just accepting our thoughts as fact, we can make more informed decisions about our thoughts.

Check out the next page to learn how to do this.

## CHALLENGING UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

(Source: Centre for Clinical Interventions; <https://www.cci.health.wa.gov.au/>)

- 1. CHECK THE EVIDENCE.** What facts support the thought being true and what information works against the thought or shows that it isn't true all the time?
- 2. KNOW YOUR ABC's.** **A** stands for antecedent, and it refers to the event or situation that triggers a response; **B** stands for beliefs, and it refers to our thoughts and beliefs about the event or situation; **C** stands for consequences, and it refers to ways we feel or behave as a result of our beliefs. We often blame the antecedent for our feelings and behaviour when it is actually our beliefs that lead to the feelings and behaviour. Once we realize that, we can then look at ways to challenge the beliefs and thoughts we have, so that we can change the way we feel and what we do.
- 3. CHALLENGE UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES.** Ask disputation questions. Here are some examples:
  - All-or-nothing thinking**----- Consider to whole picture. Ask: Am I taking all the information into account?; What else is going on that I'm ignoring?
  - Mindreading**-----Ask, don't assume! Ask: How do I know this?; What are some alternative explanations for this?; If I was feeling differently, would I still think this?
  - Disqualifying the positives**----- Acknowledge the good. Ask: Am I downplaying or ignoring some of the evidence?; What are the good things in this situation?
  - Emotional reasoning**----- Don't assume that your emotions are facts. Our emotions can lead us astray. What might be an alternative explanation?
  - Labeling**-----Judge the situation, not the person. Ask: Does this behaviour or situation reflect how things always are?; Are there examples where this label hasn't been true?

## CHALLENGING UNHELPFUL THINKING STYLES

**Magnification and Fortunetelling**-----Put it in perspective. Ask: What are the possible outcomes-best, worst, most likely? ; Am I jumping ahead of myself; How important is this in the scheme of things?

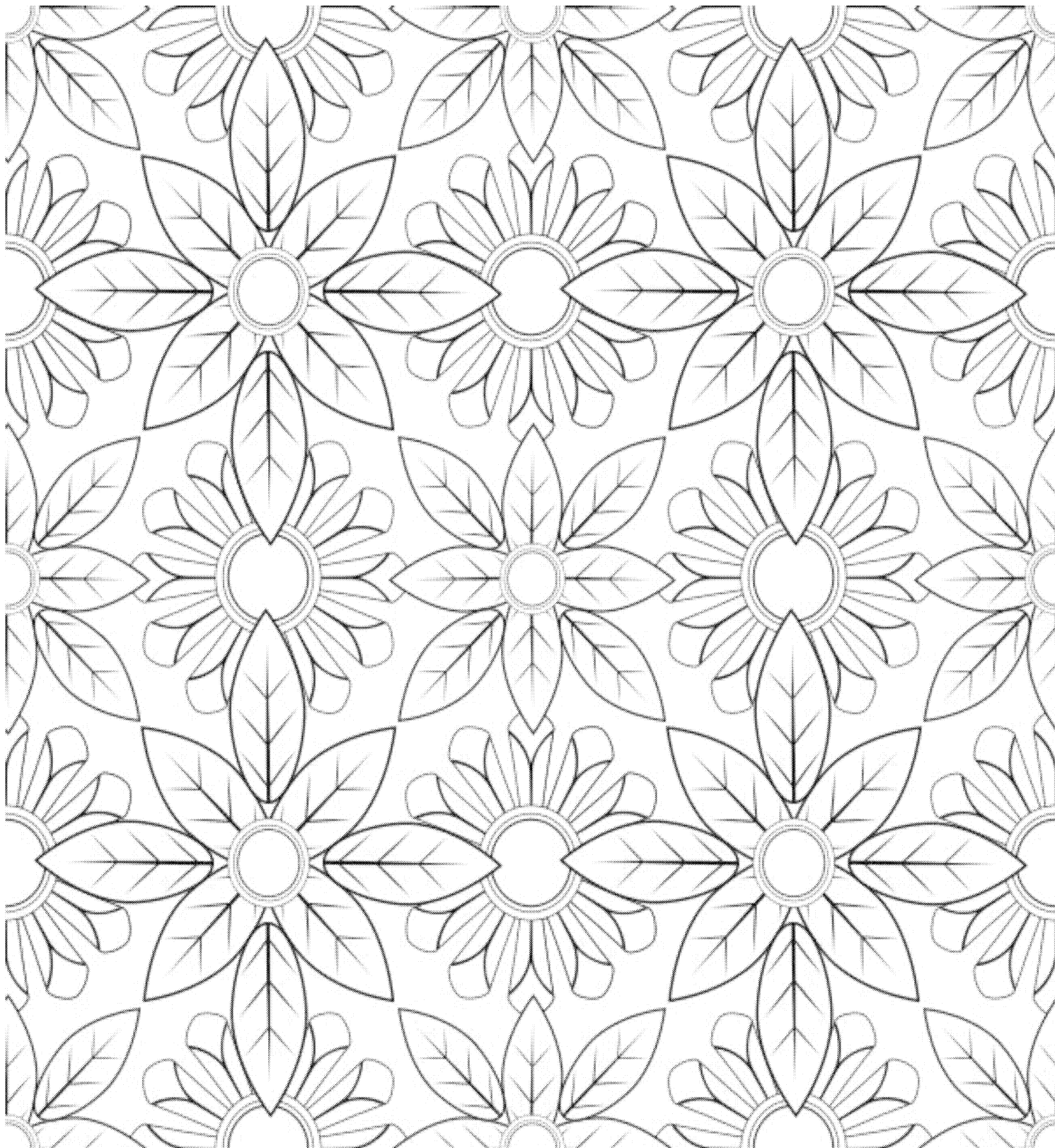
**Mental filter**----- Consider the whole picture. Ask: Am I taking all the information into account?; What else is going on that I'm ignoring?

**Overgeneralization**----- Be specific. Ask: Does this apply to all situations or am I overgeneralizing?; What are the facts and what are my interpretations?

**Personalization**----- Find all the causes. Ask: Was this entirely my responsibility?; What other factors might have affected the outcome?

- 4. Change your perspective.** What other ways are there of viewing the situation? If you were giving advice to someone you care about in this situation, what would you say? If you want to act in a certain way, how would you have to think differently.

In your next Mandala, try using complementary colors to make the drawing pop out with contrasting colors. Complementary colors are pairs of colors that sit opposite each other on the color wheel, such as orange and blue; red and green; yellow and purple.



## ENGAGING IN PLEASANT ACTIVITIES

What we spend our time doing affects how we feel. When we spend time in activities that we find meaningful and that we enjoy, we will experience less distress and feel more positively. So what do you enjoy doing? Check off all those you enjoy, or would like to try. There are some empty spots to fill in activities you enjoy that are not listed.

|                              |                                    |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Card games                   | Cooking/Baking                     |
| Board games                  | Crafts                             |
| Listening to music           | Coloring                           |
| Playing a musical instrument | Drawing                            |
| Reading                      | Painting                           |
| Writing                      | Participating in group discussions |
| Participating in a book club | Woodworking                        |
| Gardening                    | Taking courses                     |
| Going for walks              | Weight lifting                     |
| Yoga                         | Tai Chi                            |
| Calisthenics                 | Aerobic exercise                   |
| Playing sports               | Watching sports                    |
| Sudoku                       | Word Search puzzles                |
| Crossword puzzles            | Jigsaw puzzles                     |
| Watching T.V.                | Watching movies                    |
| Socializing                  | Playing video games                |
| Working on computers         | Helping others                     |
| Volunteering                 | Engaging in spiritual activities   |
| Attending religious services | Running/jogging                    |
|                              |                                    |
|                              |                                    |
|                              |                                    |
|                              |                                    |
|                              |                                    |

Do you have any special interests? (ex. Cars, Sports, History, Animals, Health, etc)?

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## ENGAGING IN PLEASANT ACTIVITIES

What are you good at? (ex. Making friends, drawing, writing music, helping others, following instructions, reading, working with wood, doing crafts, coloring, etc.). It is important that we spend time engaging in activities we are good at, as it helps us feel better about ourselves, and gives us a sense of purpose. If you are having difficulty thinking about things you are good at, ask others that know you, and list those things here.

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What do you like to get from your leisure activities? Check off all that apply and circle your top 3.

|   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| To be with people I like                | To use my imagination                 |
| To do things with a group               | To create or make something           |
| To do things on my own                  | To try new and challenging activities |
| To be physically active                 | To find my activities challenging     |
| To feel safe and secure                 | To try something new and different    |
| To use my talents and skills            | To accomplish something               |
| To be connected with family and friends | To relax                              |
| To contribute something to a group      | To make new friends                   |
| To be the leader of the activity        | To feel confident                     |
| To learn something                      | To be in pleasant surroundings        |
| To do things myself                     | To be involved in organized games     |
| To follow rules and have structure      | To have fun and enjoy myself          |
| To get rid of frustration               | To take risks                         |
| To burn off energy                      |                                       |

## Stress Management Plan

In this booklet you learned about stress and many strategies for managing stress, including:

- Tracking your stress
- Deep breathing
- Sensory approaches
- Progressive muscle relaxation
- Engaging in physical activity
- Visualization and guided imagery
- Healthy eating
- Mindfulness
- Self-talk
- Challenging unhelpful thinking styles
- Engaging in pleasant activities

Now it is time to make your own stress management plan.

What are your stress triggers?

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What are your symptoms of stress?

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## Stress Management Plan

What strategies could you use daily to help manage your stress?

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What strategies could you use when your stress level is higher than usual?

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What strategies could you use in a crisis?

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What strategies are unhelpful to you in a crisis?

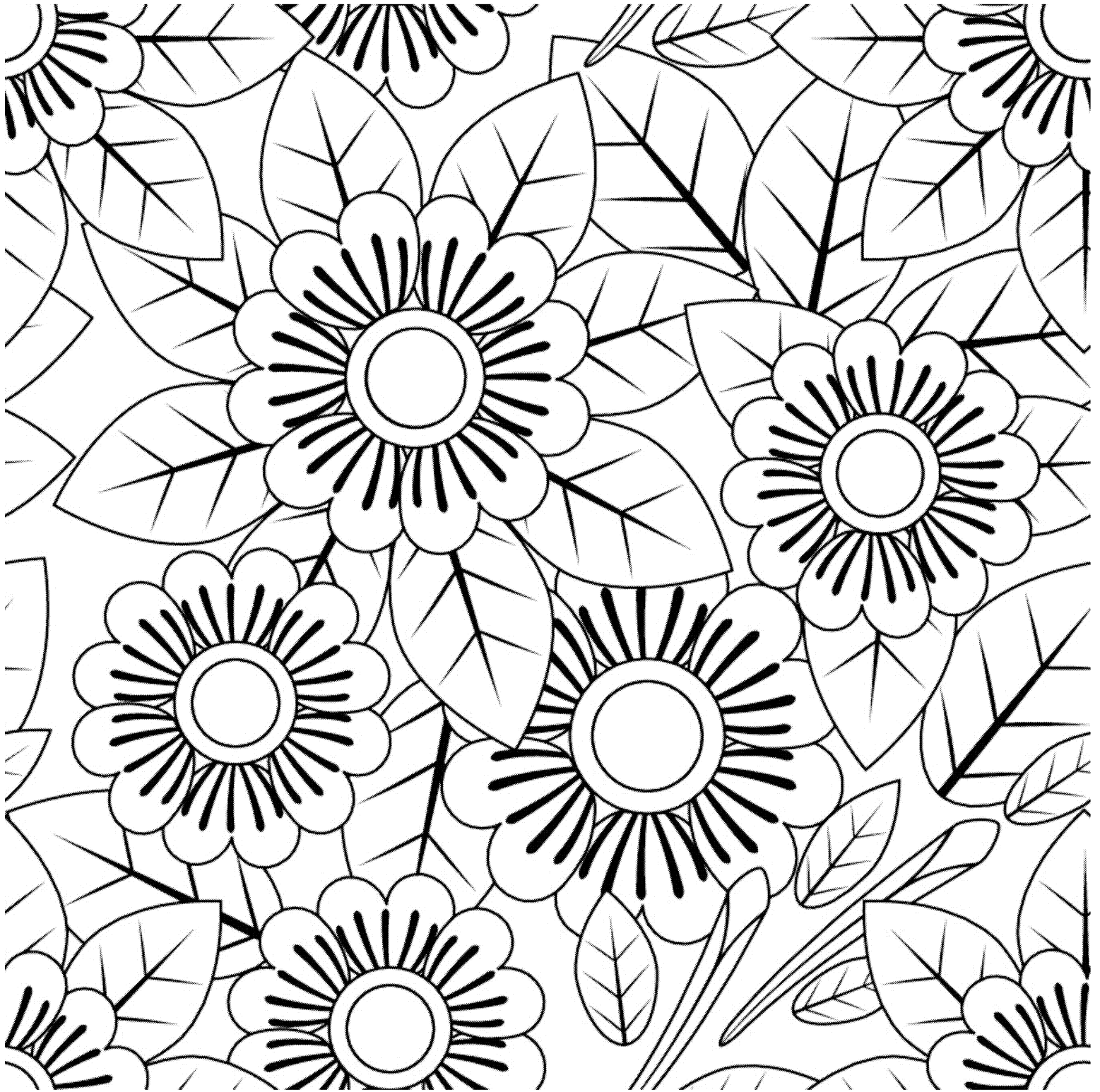
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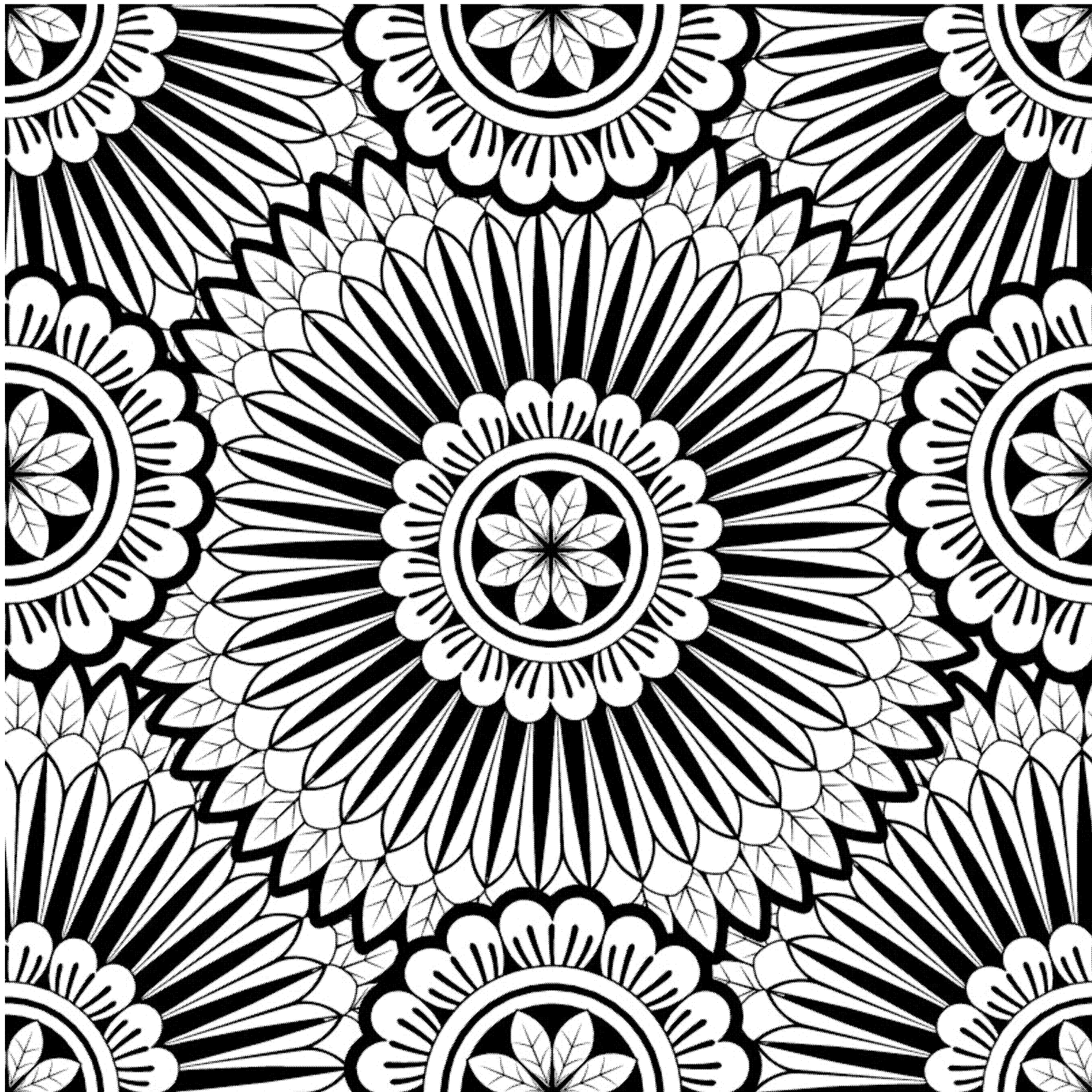
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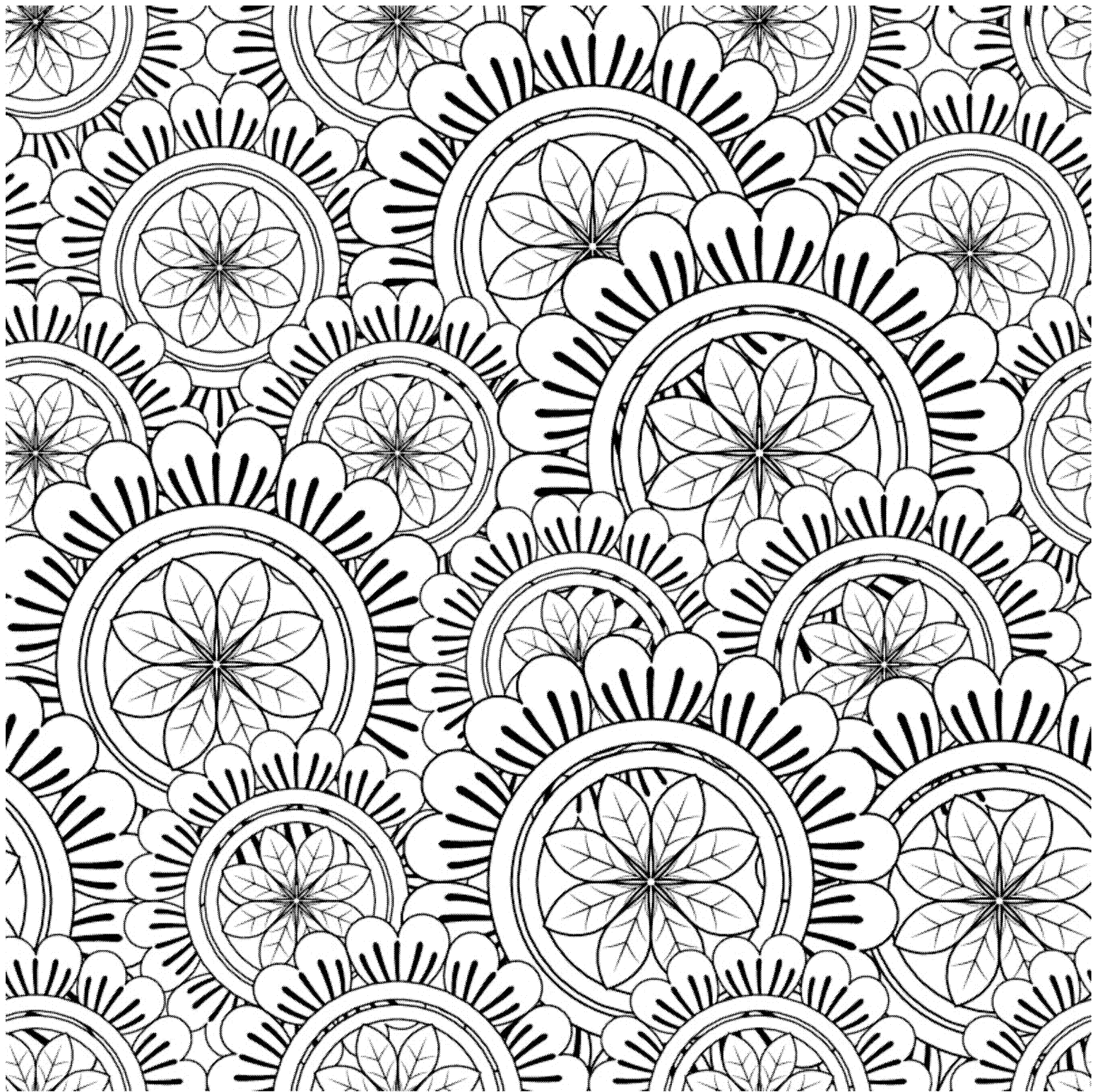
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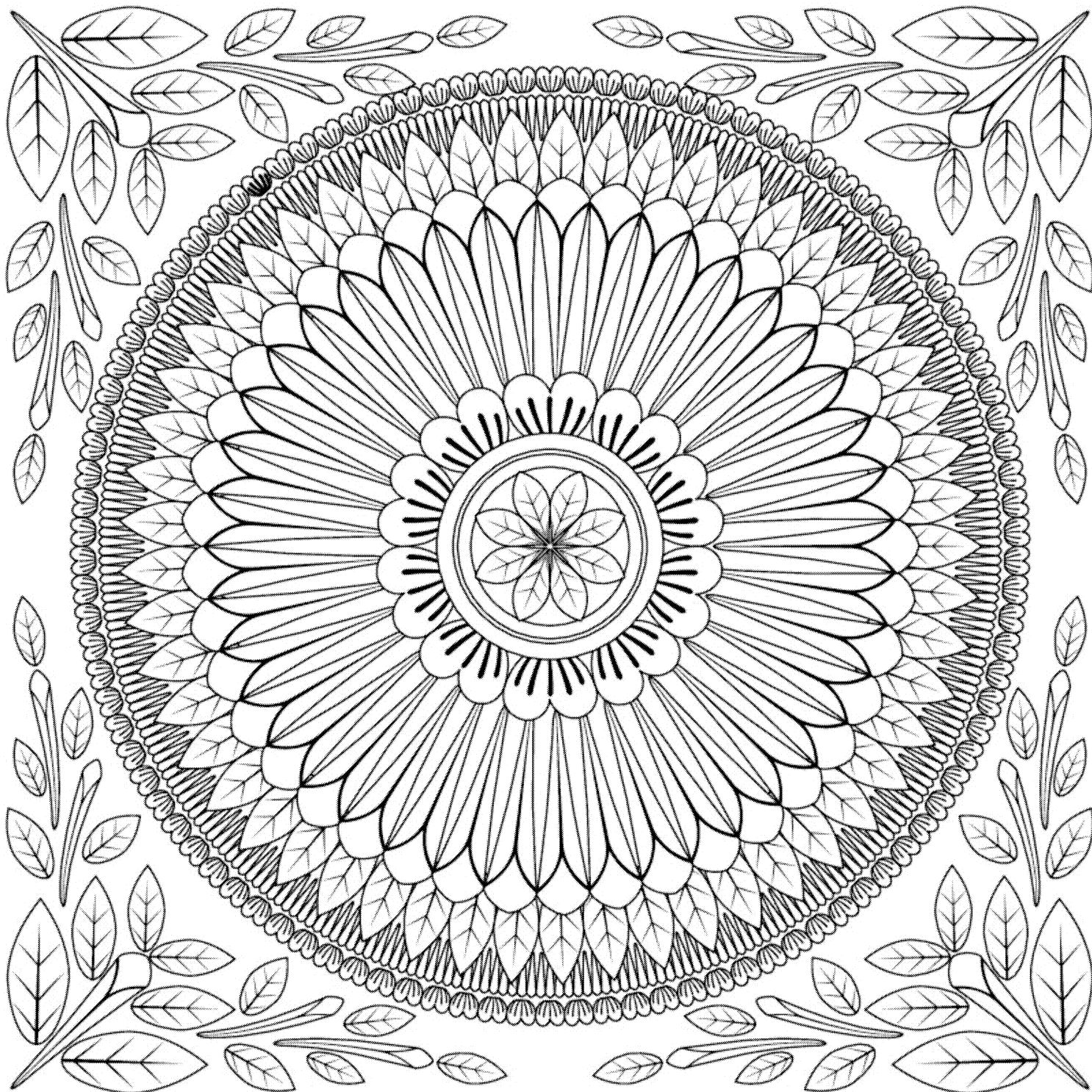
Who can you share this plan with? \_\_\_\_\_

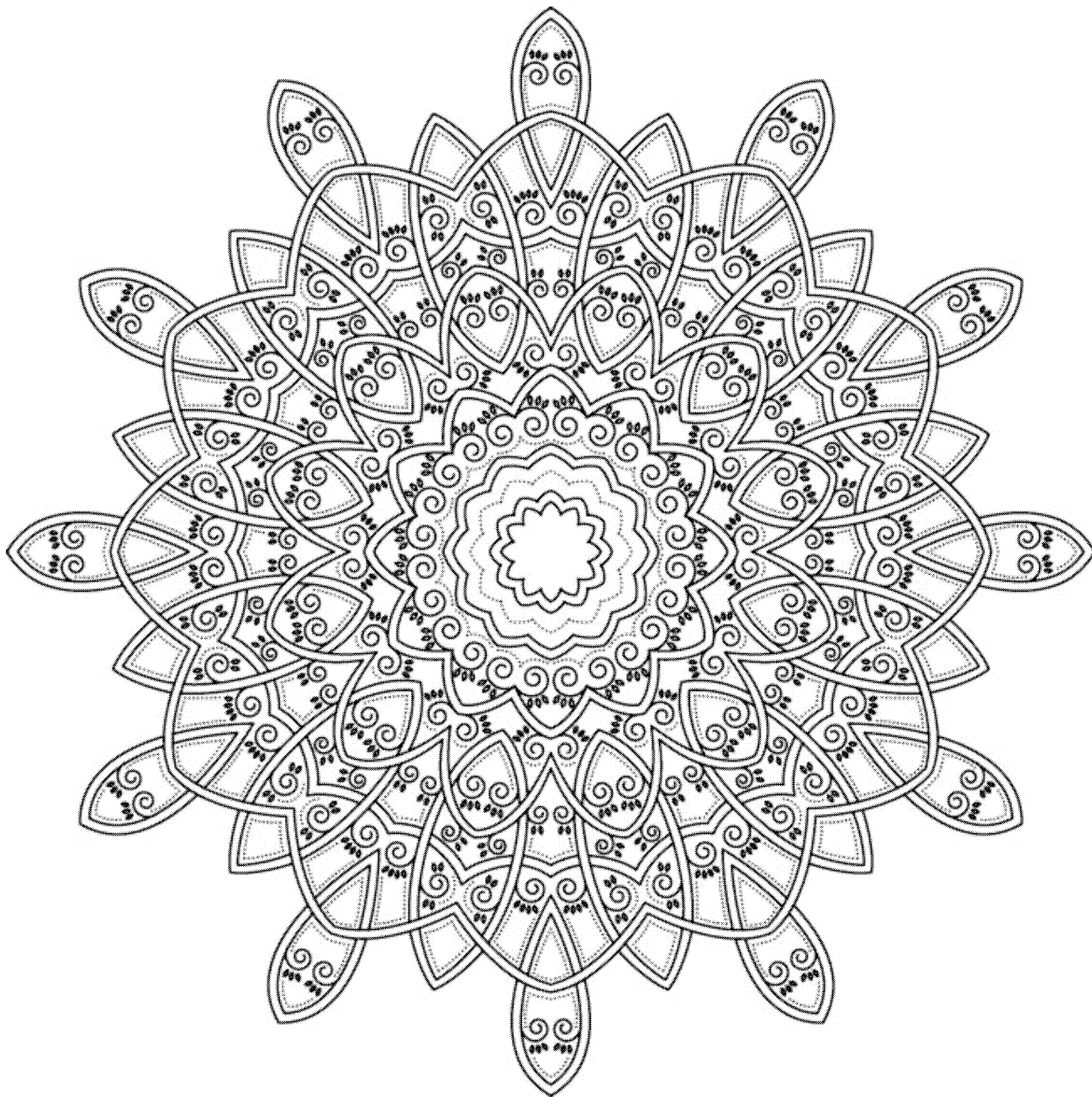
**Congratulations!** You made it through this booklet. Now enjoy the rest of your mandalas!

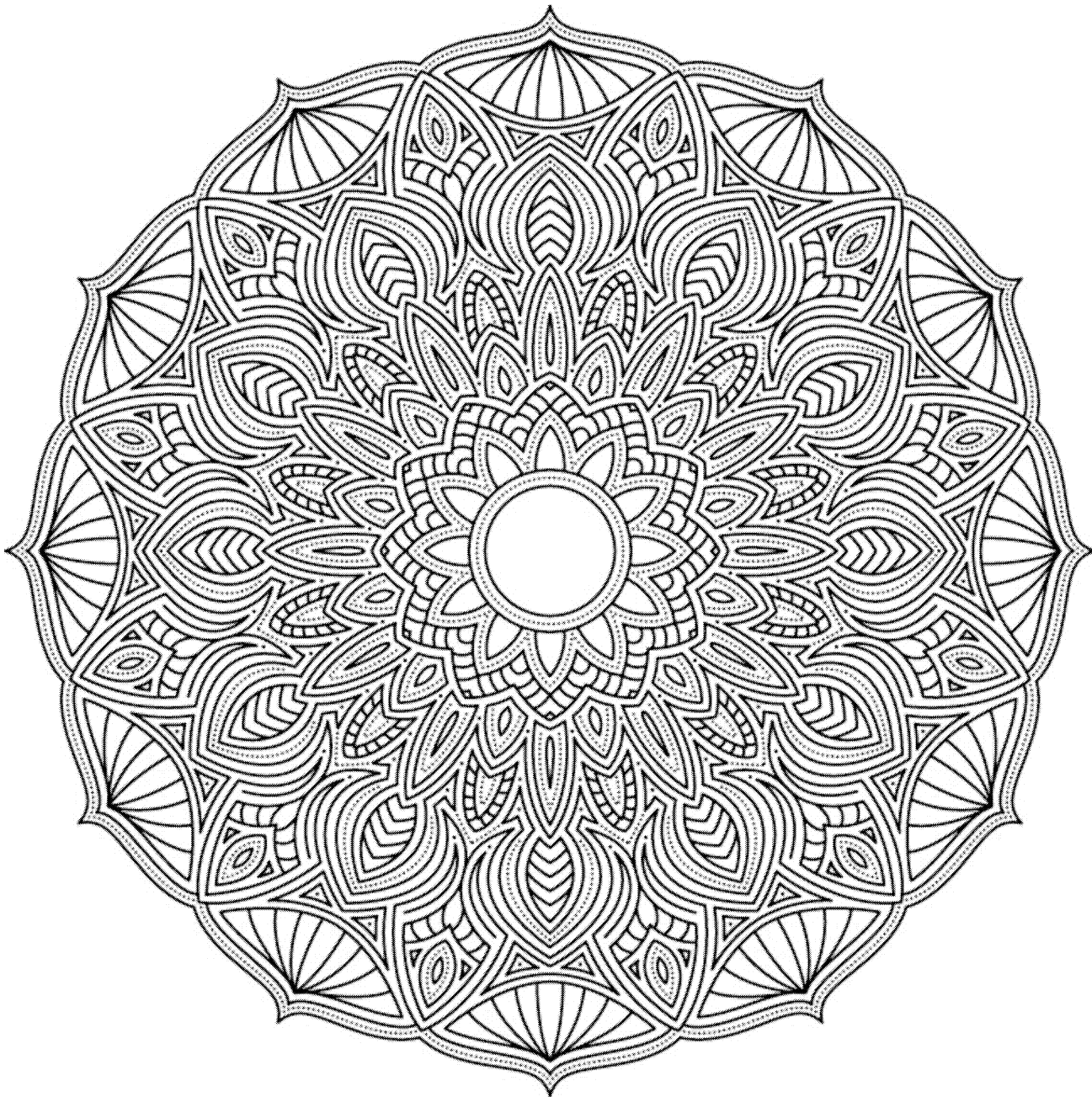


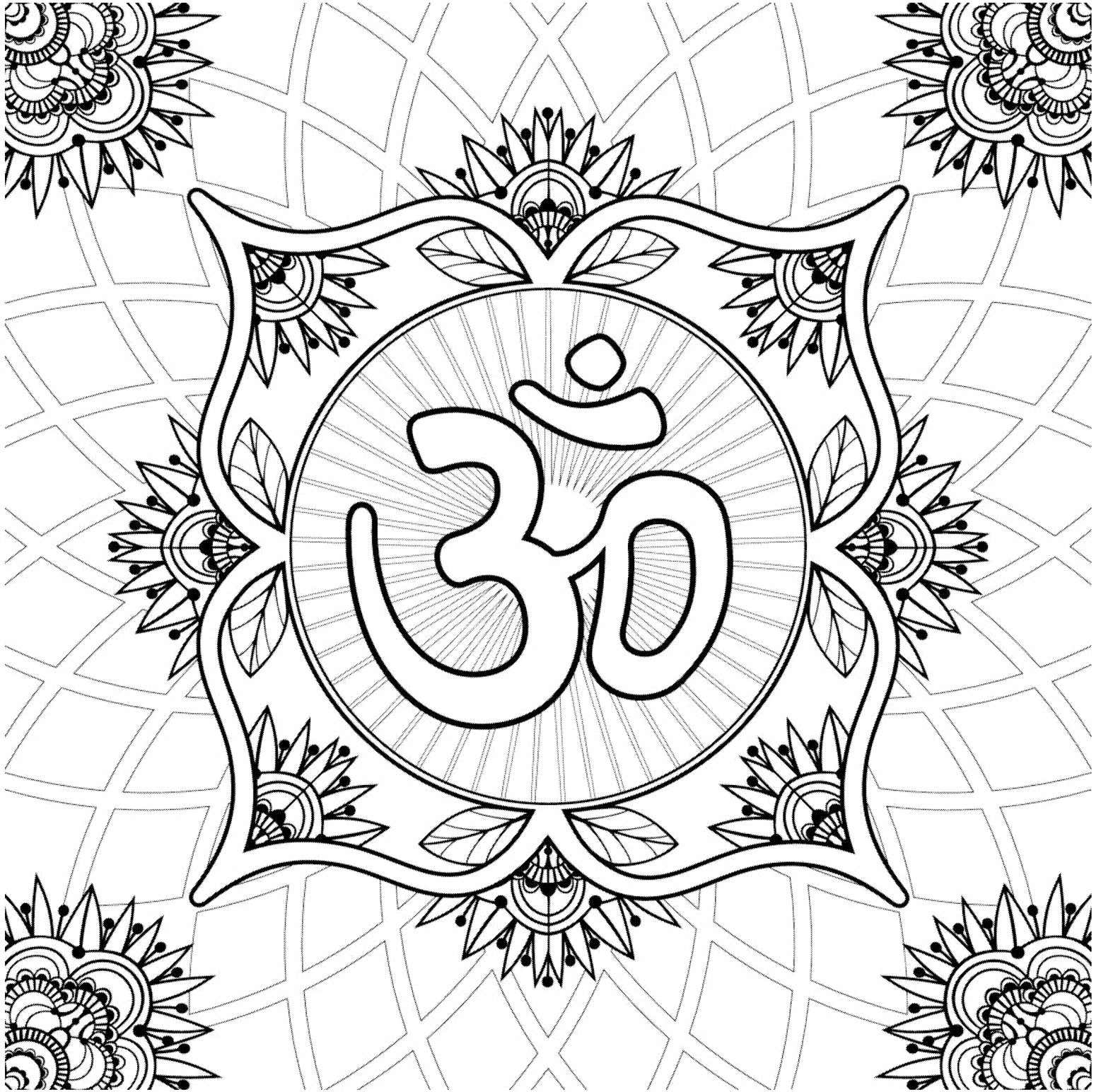


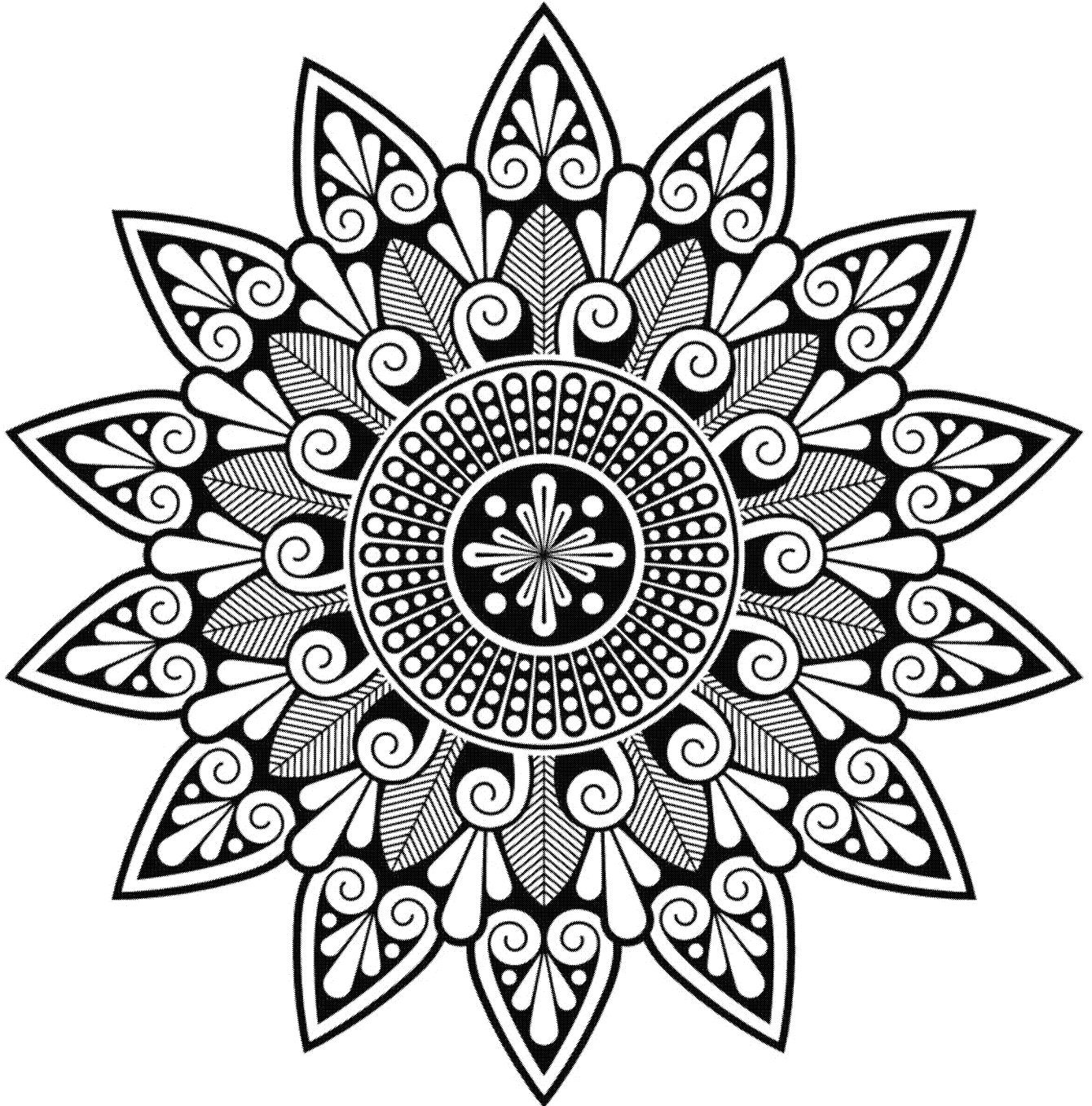












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## COVID-19 Pandemic

**Pandemic:** an epidemic disease that has spread across a large region, i.e., across countries.

**Epidemic:** a widespread occurrence of an infectious disease (like the flu) in a community at a particular time.

**Coronavirus:** are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV.

The outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may be stressful for people. Fear and anxiety about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions. This is normal and understandable. Coping with stress will make **you**, the people you care about, and your community stronger.

**Everyone reacts differently to stressful situations.** How you respond at this time can depend on your background, the things that make you different from other people, and the community you live in. Notice and accept how you feel. Self-care during times of stress will help your long-term health.

### **Stress during any infectious disease outbreak can include**

- Fear and worry about your own health and the health of your loved ones
- Changes in sleep or eating patterns
- Difficulty sleeping or concentrating
- Worsening of chronic health problems
- Increased use of alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs

**People with preexisting conditions should continue with their treatment and be aware of new or worsening symptoms.** Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with stress. Helping others cope with their stress can also make your community stronger.

### **Things you can do to support yourself**

- Take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories, including social media. Hearing about the pandemic repeatedly can be upsetting.
- Take care of your body. Take deep breaths, stretch, or meditate. Try to eat healthy, well-balanced meals, exercise regularly, get plenty of sleep, and avoid alcohol and drugs.
- Make time to unwind. Try to do some other activities you enjoy.
- Connect with others. Talk with people you trust about your concerns and how you are feeling.

### **Things you can do to keep yourself and others healthy**

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom, and before eating or preparing food.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Stay in your cell if you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue (or elbow), then throw the tissue in the trash.

Information accessed from the following websites: World Health Organization (WHO), the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), and the American Psychological Association (APA).

Common signs of infection include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath, and breathing difficulties.

Information accessed from the following websites: World Health Organization (WHO), the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), and the American Psychological Association (APA).

# Just breathe!

You may have been told in the past to “take a few deep breaths” when you were feeling worried or upset about something. On one hand this is helpful to just slow down and cool off. However, altering the speed of our breath actually can slightly change our body’s anxiety response. **Slow diaphragmatic breathing** is a developed technique that involves slowing down the breath to communicate “safety” to the brain.

While we do not recommend that you use breathing techniques to try to eliminate anxiety when you are feeling anxious, it can be a way to get through a tough situation and calm the body some so that we can make a good decision about what to do next. Try the following exercise:

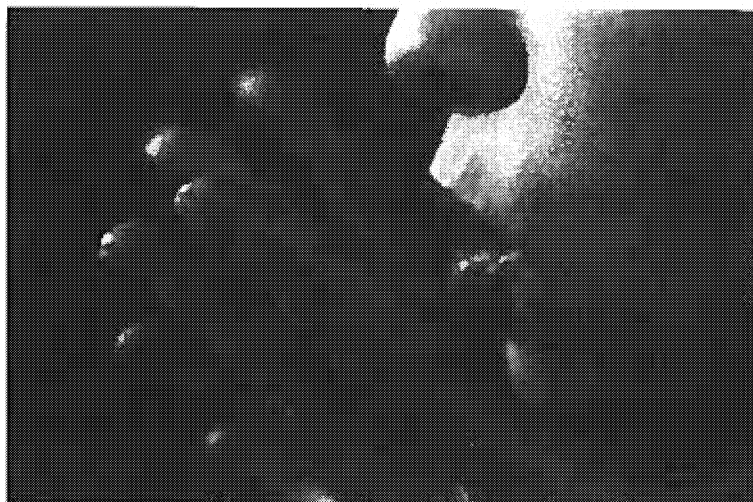


## “Slow Diaphragmatic Breathing”

1. Sit comfortably in a chair with your feet on the floor. You can lie down if you wish.
2. Fold your hands on your belly.
3. Breathe in slowly and calmly. Fill up the belly with a *normal* breath. Try not to breathe in too heavily. The hands should move up when you breathe in, as if you are filling up a balloon. Avoid lifting the shoulders as you inhale; rather, breathe into the stomach.
4. Breathe out slowly to the count of “5.” Try to slow down the rate of the exhale. After the exhale, hold for 2-3 seconds before inhaling again.
5. Work to continue to slow down the pace of the breath.
6. Practice this for about 10 minutes.
7. This works best if you practice this two times each day for 10 minutes each time. Try to find a regular time to practice this each day.

## Slow Diaphragmatic Breathing Tips:

1. The speed of the breath is more important than the depth of the breath. Avoid trying to “catch” your breath by taking really deep breaths.
2. Don’t use breathing exercises to “get rid of” the anxiety; use the breath to help get you through a tough situation, or practice it daily to “train in” a slower, calmer breathing style over time.
3. Practice! It takes time to learn how to calm the body using the breath.



## *Take home points:*

*Slow diaphragmatic breathing is one relaxation skill used in CBT. It is best used as a daily practice, like exercise, or as a way to get through a tough situation without leaving or making things worse. For best results, practice slow breathing twice a day for around 10 minutes each time.*

# “Self-care:” An Important Weapon In Our Fight Against Anxiety

As we have discussed throughout this manual, battling anxiety requires a multifaceted strategy; we have to “unite our forces” to keep anxiety from interfering with our life aims. CBT supplies us with some of the ammunition to wage this battle, but other lifestyle factors are important, as well. Below we discuss some of these factors; consider them when assessing your challenges with anxiety and consider trying out some changes to see if they help.

## Moderate and Balance Coping Skills

Address anxiety from a variety of different angles by confronting fear, problem solving, accepting that which cannot be controlled, and modifying thinking when necessary. Take care of the body and mind, addressing the important elements of self-care listed below. Remember that “diversity” is the cardinal rule when it comes to coping with challenges; the more skills and coping methods we have, the more flexible we can be when challenges arise.

### Avoid or limit use of “mind altering drugs”

Be aware that all drugs that alter state of mind such as alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, mari-juana, other illicit drugs, can exacerbate anxiety in both the short and long term. Discuss your use of these substances openly with a prescribing clinician to understand better your own risk factors.

### Treat Mental Illness

Learn to manage anxiety using CBT skills. Treat other forms of mental illness if they interfere with your life. If the therapy you try does not seem to be working, try another therapy style or therapist. Consider a “combination therapy,” which combines a assortment of therapy skills, medication, and self-care.

### Diet

Eating a balanced diet helps us maintain health, improves energy, and contributes to good mood. Be aware of the quality of your food, as well as how much you eat; eating either too much or too little can affect how you feel on a daily basis.

### Confront Conflict

Do not allow interpersonal conflicts to fester; learn assertiveness and other communication skills and address conflict proactively and diplomatically.

### Goal Setting

Set realistic goals in line with your life aims. Strive for balance of meaningful work, interpersonal (family and friends), and enjoyment-oriented goals. Remember to take one small step at a time to reach larger goals.

### Exercise

Regular exercise has been shown to be as good as antidepressant medication for treating depression and increases our resistance to debilitating anxiety. Try to get a minimum of 20 minutes of vigorous cardiovascular exercise at least three times a week. Of course, be sure to ask your doctor if you are healthy enough for more intensive exercise.

### Treat Physical Illness

Scientific research shows a connection between physical health, mood, and anxiety. Learn about your family medical history, go to the doctor as needed, and take prescribed medications.

### Sleep

Research has shown that most people need an average of about 7 hours of sleep per night. Sleeping well is an important aspect of managing anxiety. Talk to your doctor or therapist about a referral for a consultation with a sleep expert if you suffer from insomnia or sleep apnea.

### “Slow down”

Ask yourself: “Has there been a day this week in which I did not “rush” at all? Keeping a constant fast pace in activity, whether walking, working, or even planning leisure activities, communicates a sense of urgency to the brain, raising blood pressure and tension in the body. This has an impact on our anxiety from day-to-day. Practice “slowing down” your pace of life consciously to reduce this sense of urgency.

### Time Management

Set realistic goals about what can be accomplished in a certain amount of time. Avoid multi-tasking excessively. Plan your day with enough time left over to sleep enough, exercise, and enjoy a leisure activity. If you feel that you have trouble managing your time, discuss it with a therapist or life coach.

### Social Support

When we feel supported by others, we feel more safe, secure, and happy. One important approach to treating anxiety is to reduce symptoms; another way is to increase positive experiences, especially with people that help us feel good about ourselves.



# Slow down the mind...

## Mindfulness for relaxation and anxiety management

Take a moment to observe the photo to the right and then try this exercise:

Just describe what you see in completely *objective* terms. Just notice colors, shapes, shades, etc. Write what you see here:

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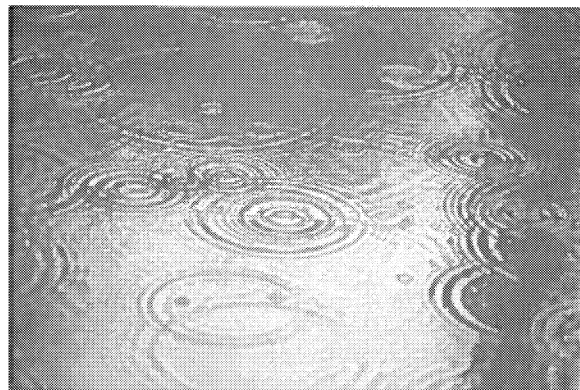
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Now notice the memories and thoughts that come up when you look at this picture. Allow your mind to wander as it will, and write down what "pops" into your mind as it comes up. Take 1-2 minutes to do this.

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### Mindfulness Exercise

1. Sit quietly with your feet on the floor, or lie down, and relax your body. Begin with some **slow, diaphragmatic breathing**. Focus your mind on your breath as it flows in and out of your nostrils. Continue to follow your breath to whatever extent you can.
2. As you breathe, notice the tendency of the mind to wander. Instead of trying to focus just on the breath, *just notice what the mind does*. It may wander to a worry, or a memory, or to what you plan to do later today. You may notice sensations in your body, such as a pain or itch. You may hear or smell things. Just notice whatever happens and then gently bring yourself back to your breath. You can remind yourself that you will tend to these other things later, and for now you will just spend time paying attention to your breath and to your mind.
3. Allow the mind to wander as it will, time after time. Avoid the tendency to try hard to focus on something. Simply allow your mind to wander and then bring yourself back to your breath. Notice the tendency of your experience to *change*. Imagine that each thought, sensation, emotion—anything— is like a cloud floating through the sky, soon to be replaced by another one.
4. Continue to practice this for about 10 minutes. Depending on your schedule you can add time to your practice if you want. Practice once or twice a day.
5. Remember that there is no "right" way to do this, other than to just notice whatever comes into your consciousness. It is impossible to "fail" at mindfulness—just let your mind wander!

The techniques you were just using are called **mindfulness** skills. These are techniques that originate in Buddhist meditation practices, but they have been studied and used more and more by psychologists and physicians in the last 20 years or so to help people regulate their emotions and calm their minds. So how do they work?

It is not fully understood why mindfulness is so helpful, but we have some ideas. The goal of mindfulness is to describe all kinds of experiences *objectively* and *non-judgmentally*, focusing on the facts about the present moment. Sound familiar? It may remind you of **cognitive skills**, which are an attempt to gather evidence around a thought that triggers our anxiety, which lessens the power of that thought. Another way to lessen the power of the thought is to see it for what it is: just a thought. And one thing we know about thoughts is that they *change*. It is difficult to adequately capture the gist of mindfulness by trying to explain it, so try the exercise to the right.



## "I can't control my mind!"

On the last page we suggested that you "let your mind wander." This may seem to be the opposite of what you have been told to do while trying to meditate or complete a task. We go into something expecting to have "control" of our minds.

We know from research that we cannot completely "control" our minds, no matter how hard we try, especially when we are feeling anxious. Why do you think this is true?

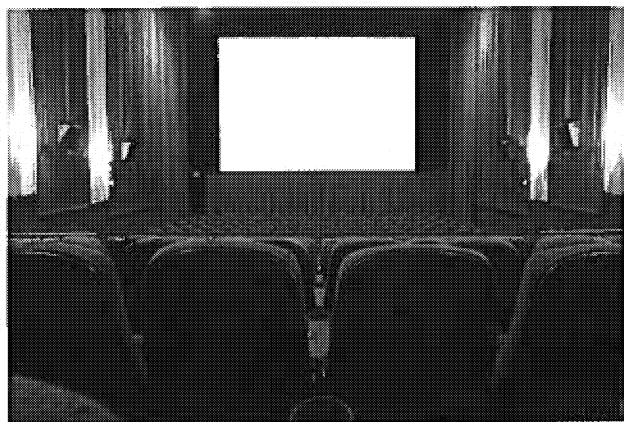
Think back to the "Anxiety 101" section of this manual where we described the function of anxiety to help protect us. When we are anxious, the amygdala, our anxiety center of the brain is trying to send off its "anxiety alarm." One way it does this is by trying to alert us to the possibility that something is dangerous, either "out there" in the environment or inside our bodies. After all, if we are too focused on one thing, we could be hurt by something else! So the mind tries to distract us, making it very difficult to "control" the mind. In fact, you may find that the more you try to control it, the more the mind tries to distract you!



## Having trouble getting "mindful?"

Try this: pretend your mind is like a movie screen. You are sitting in the movie theater, observing what is projected on the screen, but you are not in control; you just watch and follow what you see.

Try closing your eyes and just notice what images, thoughts, or memories get projected on that screen. They may be related or not—whatever gets projected is fair game! If you start feeling attached to the content of the "movie," just notice that attachment and then let the movie continue to something else.



## "Why should I practice mindfulness?"

Mindfulness techniques are an important part of CBT for the following reasons:

-Trying to "control" the mind is a futile endeavor. In fact, trying to control the mind often makes us feel worse, because we keep failing at it! The first step to any CBT intervention is to stop trying to control the mind through force; only after we do this are we prepared to influence the anxiety using CBT skills.

-Mindfulness helps us practice observing but not reacting to anxiety and other emotions. We learn to accept or tolerate these emotions, rather than trying to eradicate them.

-Mindfulness helps to retrain the brain; by not reacting to the anxiety and not trying to fix it, we communicate to the amygdala that it is not dangerous. This is one way to work on addressing the "fear of fear."

-When we stop and pay attention to the present moment, we listen to our anxiety "alarm." If we give it time and keep from "fueling" the anxiety, the body can eventually learn that it does not need this alarm any longer, so it can turn it off.

## Mindfulness: Take Home Points

*Mindfulness is a relaxation strategy that can be helpful in calming the mind by reducing our tendency to try to control it, which often makes the anxiety worse. Mindfulness techniques focus on facts and objective information about current experiences, including emotions, thoughts, memories, and sensations. Our aim is to notice these experiences without judgment or any attempt to change them; we simply observe them, like clouds in the sky or the images on a movie screen. Mindfulness techniques are not likely to cure anxiety all by themselves, but they can be helpful if used with other CBT skills, and can provide a foundation upon which to develop these skills.*



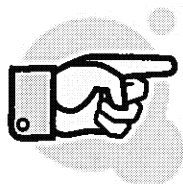
Resources. Results. Relief.

## HOW TO DO PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

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Progressive Muscle Relaxation teaches you how to relax your muscles through a two-step process. First, you systematically tense particular muscle groups in your body, such as your neck and shoulders. Next, you release the tension and notice how your muscles feel when you relax them. This exercise will help you to lower your overall tension and stress levels, and help you relax when you are feeling anxious. It can also help reduce physical problems such as stomachaches and headaches, as well as improve your sleep.

People with anxiety difficulties are often so tense throughout the day that they don't even recognize what being relaxed feels like. Through practice you can learn to distinguish between the feelings of a tensed muscle and a completely relaxed muscle. Then, you can begin to "cue" this relaxed state at the first sign of the muscle tension that accompanies your feelings of anxiety. By tensing and releasing, you learn not only what relaxation feels like, but also to recognize when you are starting to get tense during the day.



### HELPFUL HINTS:

- Set aside about 15 minutes to complete this exercise.
- Find a place where you can complete this exercise without being disturbed.
- For the first week or two, practise this exercise twice a day until you get the hang of it. The better you become at it, the quicker the relaxation response will "kick in" when you really need it!
- You do not need to be feeling anxious when you practise this exercise. In fact, it is better to first practice it when you are calm. That way, it will be easier to do when feeling anxious.

### Getting ready

Find a quiet, comfortable place to sit, then close your eyes and let your body go loose. A reclining armchair is ideal. You can lie down, but this will increase your chances of falling asleep. Although relaxing before bed can improve your sleep, the goal of this exercise is to learn to relax while awake. Wear loose, comfortable clothing, and don't forget to remove your shoes. Take about five slow, deep breaths before you begin.

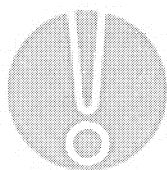
## How To Do It

### The Tension – Relaxation Response

#### STEP ONE: Tension

The first step is applying muscle tension to a specific part of the body. This step is essentially the same regardless of which muscle group you are targeting. First, focus on the target muscle group, for example, your left hand. Next, take a slow, deep breath and squeeze the muscles as hard as you can for about 5 seconds. It is important to *really feel* the tension in the muscles, which may even cause a bit of discomfort or shaking. In this instance, you would be making a tight fist with your left hand.

It is easy to accidentally tense other surrounding muscles (for example, the shoulder or arm), so try to **ONLY** tense the muscles you are targeting. Isolating muscle groups gets easier with practice.



**Be Careful!** Take care not to hurt yourself while tensing your muscles. You should never feel intense or shooting pain while completing this exercise. Make the muscle tension deliberate, yet gentle. If you have problems with pulled muscles, broken bones, or any medical issues that would hinder physical activity, consult your doctor first.

#### STEP TWO: Relaxing the Tense Muscles

This step involves quickly relaxing the tensed muscles. After about 5 seconds, let all the tightness flow out of the tensed muscles. Exhale as you do this step. You should feel the muscles become loose and limp, as the tension flows out. **It is important to very deliberately focus on and notice the difference between the tension and relaxation. This is the most important part of the whole exercise.**

**Note:** It can take time to learn to relax the body and notice the difference between tension and relaxation. At first, it can feel uncomfortable to be focusing on your body, but this can become quite enjoyable over time.

Remain in this relaxed state for about 15 seconds, and then move on to the next muscle group. Repeat the tension-relaxation steps. After completing all of the muscle groups, take some time to enjoy the deep state of relaxation.

## The Different Muscle Groups

During this exercise, you will be working with almost all the major muscle groups in your body. To make it easier to remember, start with your feet and systematically move up (or if you prefer, you can do it in the reverse order, from your forehead down to your feet). For example:

- **Foot** (curl your toes downward)
- **Lower leg and foot** (tighten your calf muscle by pulling toes towards you)
- **Entire leg** (squeeze thigh muscles while doing above)

*(Repeat on other side of body)*

- **Hand** (clench your fist)
- **Entire right arm** (tighten your biceps by drawing your forearm up towards your shoulder and “make a muscle”, while clenching fist)

*(Repeat on other side of body)*

- **Buttocks** (tighten by pulling your buttocks together)
- **Stomach** (suck your stomach in)
- **Chest** (tighten by taking a deep breath)
- **Neck and shoulders** (raise your shoulders up to touch your ears)
- **Mouth** (open your mouth wide enough to stretch the hinges of your jaw)
- **Eyes** (clench your eyelids tightly shut)
- **Forehead** (raise your eyebrows as far as you can)

It can be helpful to listen to someone guide you through these steps. There are many relaxation CDs for sale that will take you through a progressive muscle relaxation (or something very similar). Alternatively, you can record a script of this process on a tape or CD, or ask a friend or relative with a calm, soothing voice to record it for you. It would sound something like this:

*Take a deep breath in through your nose...hold your breath for a few seconds...and now breathe out...take another deep breath through your nose... Now pay attention to your body and how it feels.... Start with your **right foot**... squeeze all the muscles in your right foot. Curl your toes as tight as you can, now hold it....hold it...good...now relax and exhale...let your foot go limp...notice the difference between the tension and relaxation....feel the tension flow out of your foot like water...(then repeat with **right lower leg and foot, entire right leg, etc...**)*

## Quick Tense & Relax!

Once you have become familiar with the “tension and relaxation” technique, and have been practicing it for a couple weeks, you can begin to practise a very short version of progressive muscle relaxation. In this approach, you learn how to tense larger groups of muscles, which takes even less time. These muscle groups are:

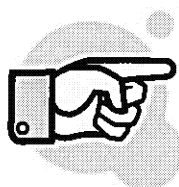
1. Lower limbs (feet and legs)
2. Stomach and chest
3. Arms, shoulders, and neck
4. Face

So instead of working with just one specific muscle group at a time (e.g., your stomach), you can focus on the complete group (your stomach AND chest). You can start by focusing on your breathing during the tension and relaxation. When doing this shortened version, it can be helpful to say a certain word or phrase to yourself as you slowly exhale (such as “*relax*”, “*let go*”, “*stay calm*”, “*peace*” “*it will pass*” etc...). This word or phrase will become associated with a relaxed state; eventually, saying this word alone can bring on a calm feeling. This can be handy during times when it would be hard to take the time to go through all the steps of progressive muscle relaxation.

## Release Only

A good way to even further shorten the time you take to relax your muscles is to become familiar with the “release only” technique. One of the benefits of tensing and releasing muscles is that you learn to recognize what tense muscles feel like and what relaxed muscles feel like.

Once you feel comfortable with the tension and relaxation techniques, you can start doing “release only”, which involves **removing** the “tension” part of the exercise. For example, instead of tensing your stomach and chest before relaxing them, try just relaxing the muscles. At first, the feeling of relaxation might feel less intense than when you tensed the muscles beforehand, but with practice, the release-only technique can be just as relaxing.



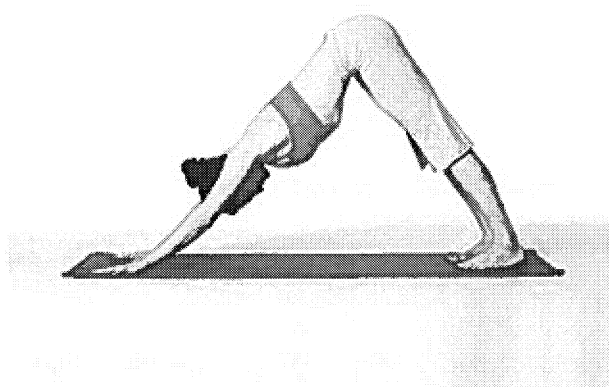
**Final Note:** Remember to practise progressive muscle relaxation often, whether you are feeling anxious or not. This will make the exercise even more effective when you really do need to relax! Though it may feel a bit tedious at first, ultimately you will gain a skill that will probably become a very important part of managing your anxiety in your daily life.



### Mountain Pose

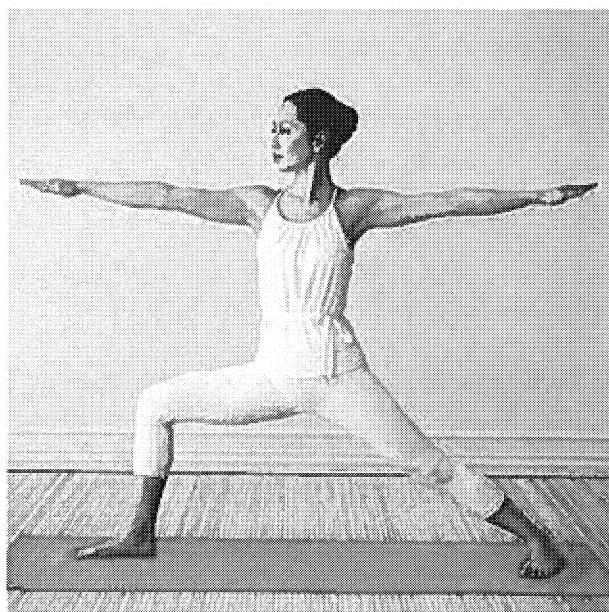
- Stand tall with feet together, shoulders relaxed, weight evenly distributed through your soles, arms at sides.

Take a deep breath and raise your hands overhead, palms facing each other with arms straight. Reach up toward the sky with your fingertips



### Downward Dog

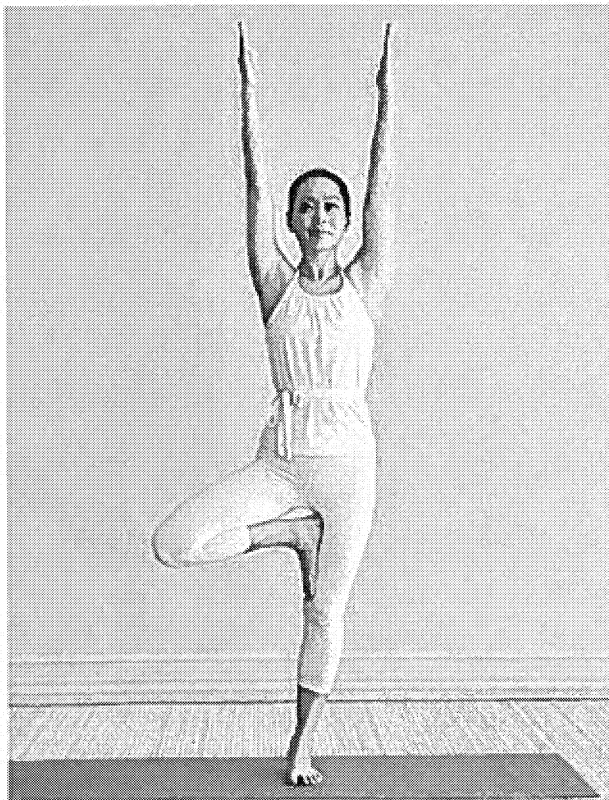
- Start on all fours with hands directly under shoulders, knees under hips.
- Walk hands a few inches forward and spread fingers wide, pressing palms into mat.
- Curl toes under and slowly press hips toward ceiling, bringing your body into an inverted V, pressing shoulders away from ears. Feet should be hip-width apart, knees slightly bent.
- Hold for 3 full breaths.



### Warrior

- Stand with legs 3 to 4 feet apart, turning right foot out 90 degrees and left foot in slightly.
- Bring your hands to your hips and relax your shoulders, then extend arms out to the sides, palms down.
- Bend right knee 90 degrees, keeping knee over ankle; gaze out over right hand. Stay for 1 minute.

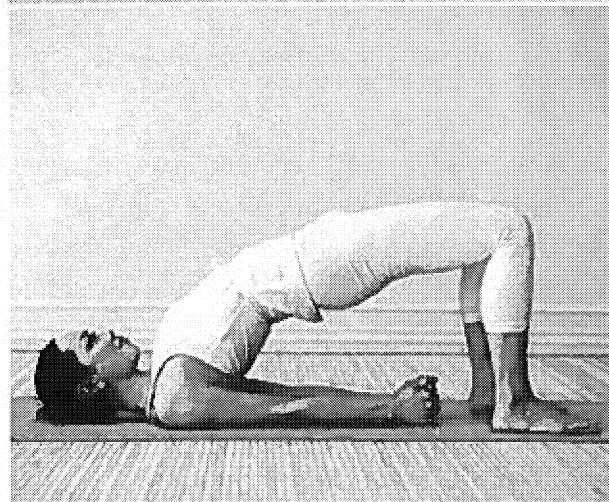
Switch sides and repeat



### Tree Pose

- Stand with arms at sides.
- Shift weight onto left leg and place sole of right foot inside left thigh, keeping hips facing forward.
- Once balanced, bring hands in front of you in prayer position, palms together.
- On an inhalation, extend arms over shoulders, palms separated and facing each other. Stay for 30 seconds.
- Lower and repeat on opposite side.

**Make it easier:** Bring your right foot to the inside of your left ankle, keeping your toes on the floor for balance. As you get stronger and develop better balance, move your foot to the inside of your left calf

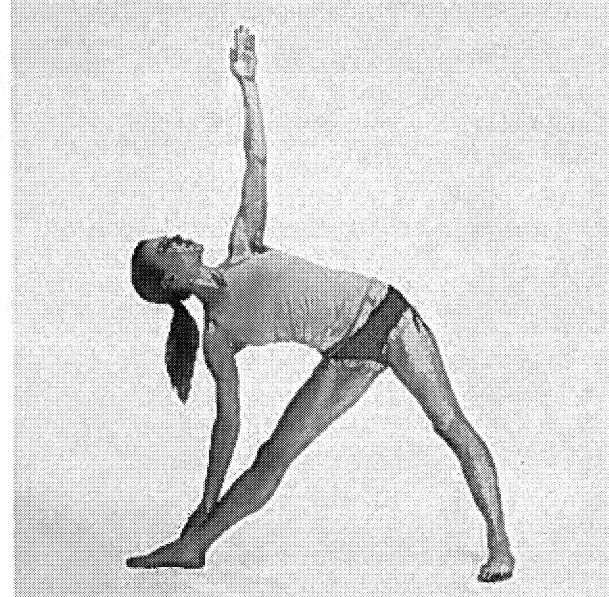


### Bridge Pose

*Stretches chest and thighs; extends spine*

- Lie on floor with knees bent and directly over heels.
- Place arms at sides, palms down. Exhale, then press feet into floor as you lift hips.
- Clasp hands under lower back and press arms down, lifting hips until thighs are parallel to floor, bringing chest toward chin. Hold for 1 minute.

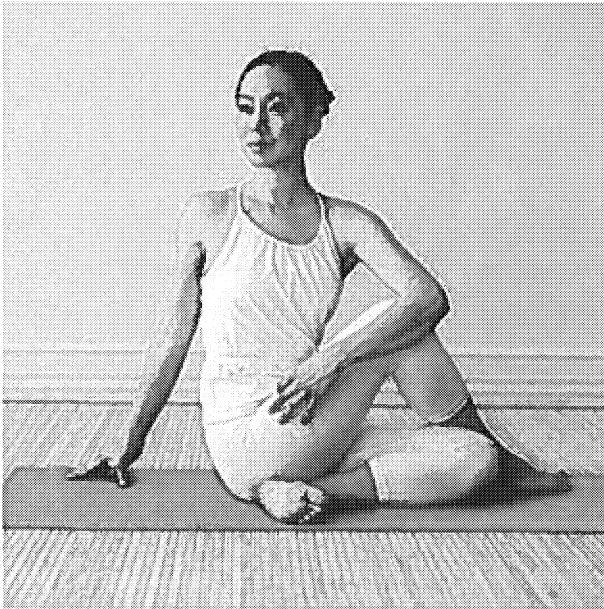
**Make it easier:** Place a stack of pillows underneath your tailbone



### Triangle Pose

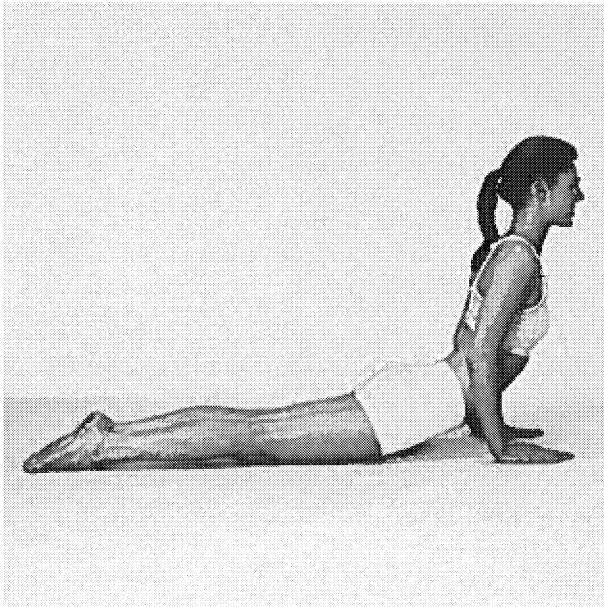
- Extend arms out to sides, then bend over your right leg.
- Stand with feet about 3 feet apart, toes on your right foot turned out to 90 degrees, left foot to 45 degrees.
- Allow your right hand to touch the floor or rest on your right leg below or above the knee, and extend the fingertips of your left hand toward the ceiling.
- Turn your gaze toward the ceiling, and hold for 5 breaths.

Stand and repeat on opposite side



### Seated Twist

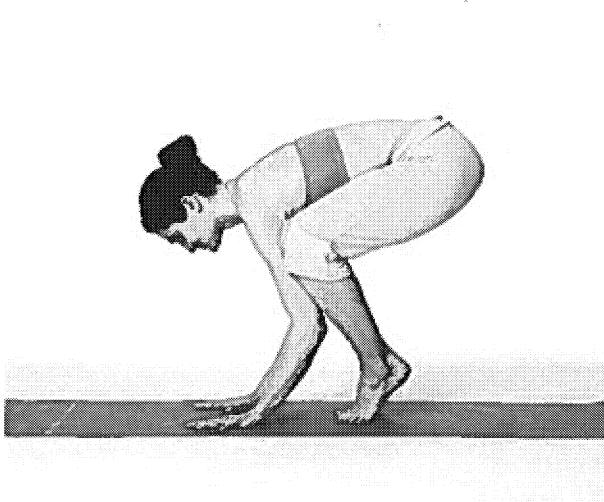
- Sit on the floor with your legs extended.
- Cross right foot over outside of left thigh; bend left knee. Keep right knee pointed toward ceiling.
- Place left elbow to the outside of right knee and right hand on the floor behind you.
- Twist right as far as you can, moving from your abdomen; keep both sides of your butt on the floor. Stay for 1 minute.
- Switch sides and repeat.
- **Make it easier:** Keep bottom leg straight and place both hands on raised knee. If your lower back rounds forward, sit on a folded blanket.



### Cobra

- Lie facedown on the floor with thumbs directly under shoulders, legs extended with the tops of your feet on the floor.
- Tighten your pelvic floor, and tuck hips downward as you squeeze your glutes.
- Press shoulders down and away from ears.
- Push through your thumbs and index fingers as you raise your chest toward the wall in front of you.

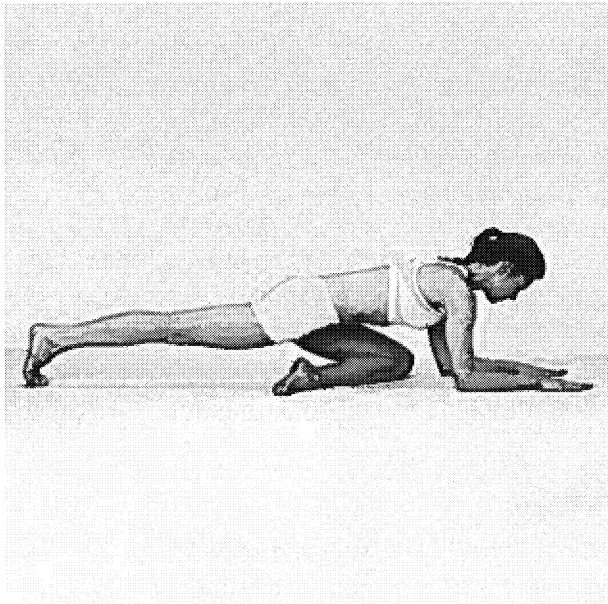
Relax and repeat



### Crow Pose

- Get into downward dog position (palms pressed into mat, feet hip-width apart) and walk feet forward until knees touch your arms.
- Bend your elbows, lift heels off floor, and rest knees against the outside of your upper arms. Keep toes on floor, abs engaged and legs pressed against arms. Hold for 5 to 10 breaths.

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### Pigeon Pose

- Begin in a full push-up position, palms aligned under shoulders.
- Place left knee on the floor near shoulder with left heel by right hip.
- Lower down to forearms and bring right leg down with the top of the foot on the floor (not shown).
- Keep chest lifted to the wall in front of you, gazing down.
- If you're more flexible, bring chest down to floor and extend arms in front of you.
- Pull navel in toward spine and tighten your pelvic-floor muscles; contract right side of glutes.
- Curl right toes under while pressing ball of foot into the floor, pushing through your heel.

Bend knee to floor and release; do 5 reps total, then switch sides and repeat.



### Child's Pose

- Sit up comfortably on your heels.
- Roll your torso forward, bringing your forehead to rest on the bed in front of you.
- Lower your chest as close to your knees as you comfortably can, extending your arms in front of you.

Hold the pose and breathe

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# Face coverings required. Please keep 6 ft apart.



Non-medical masks, bandanas, scarves,  
and cloth can be used.

**Pages 60 to / à 64  
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**Pages 65 to / à 71  
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**Pages 72 to / à 86  
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