



THE PSYCHOLOGY  
FOUNDATION  
OF CANADA

LA FONDATION  
DE PSYCHOLOGIE  
DU CANADA

[psychologyfoundation.org](http://psychologyfoundation.org)

Webinar 2, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020

# Stress Busting Techniques for Youth & Young Adults

*30 Minutes of 'Magical' Practices*

**Dr Harvey Skinner, York University**

We all encounter stress in our daily lives that at times can be difficult to manage – affecting the health of our body, mind, emotions and spirit. This is especially true as we navigate the many challenges from the COVID 19 pandemic. Practical approaches are needed that can help kids, youth and parents manage their stress. Webinar participants will learn about and practice some simple yet powerful techniques for calming our family and ourselves despite what is occurring around us. This second of two PFC Webinars focuses on practices for youth and young adults (approximately 15 – 30 years).

## AGENDA

- a) Welcome and Warm-Up
- b) Stress Busting Techniques
  - a. **Breathing Practice:** for calming your mind and nervous system
  - b. **Switching:** for unblocking and balancing energy flow
  - c. **Acupressure Points:** for managing acute reactions and emotions
  - d. **Pal Dan Gum:** eight 'silken movements' for stimulating awareness, strength and balance
- c) Question and Answer

**Dr. Harvey Skinner** is a Professor of Psychology & Global Health and was Founding Dean (2006 – 2016) of the Faculty of Health, York University, Toronto. He is a Registered Psychologist in Ontario and a certified trainer in Motivational Interviewing and in Capacitar practices. At a personal level, he has a regular practice of meditation, yoga and Qi Gong. email: [harvey.skinner@yorku.ca](mailto:harvey.skinner@yorku.ca)

## Breath Practice

*Take a deep breath, expanding your chest and belly, to the count of five. Pause. Exhale slowly to the count of five. Repeat four times.*

Congratulations. You've just calmed your nervous system.

Controlled breathing, like what you just practiced, has been shown to reduce stress, increase alertness and boost your immune system. For centuries yogis have used breath control, or pranayama, to promote concentration and improve vitality. Buddha advocated breath-meditation as a way to reach enlightenment.

Science is just beginning to provide evidence that the benefits of this ancient practice are real. Studies have found, for example, that breathing practices can help reduce symptoms associated with anxiety, insomnia, post-traumatic stress disorder, depression and attention deficit disorder.

### How to Practice Coherent Breathing

If you have the time to learn only one technique, this is the one to try. In coherent breathing, the goal is to breathe at a rate of five breaths per minute, which generally translates into inhaling and exhaling to the count of five or six. If you have never practiced breathing exercises before, you may have to work up to this practice slowly, starting with inhaling and exhaling to the count of three and working your way up to six.

- 1. Sitting, standing or lying down: place your hands on your belly.*
- 2. Slowly breathe in expanding your chest & belly to the count of five.*
- 3. Pause.*
- 4. Slowly breathe out to the count of six.*

Work your way up to practicing this pattern for 5 to 20 minutes a day.

## Switching

Switching is a very beneficial exercise to calm and centre yourself; to lighten anxiety or depression; and to focus the mind and spirit. For example, Switching can be useful when having problems going to sleep. For students, Switching may be helpful before an exam or before starting a new class.

### Steps

- 1) Begin by sitting comfortably in a chair. Breathe slowly and deeply.
- 2) Cross your left ankle over your right ankle. Extend your hands forward and turn your hands over so that the thumbs are directed toward the ground. Cross your right hand over your left and interlace your fingers. With interlaced fingers touch the centre of your chest (sternum).
- 3) Close your eyes, breathe deeply and relax your entire body. Imagine that you are able to drop down deeply into the centre of your being.

*You can imagine a centre beneath your navel in the centre of your abdomen. For the people of China this centre is called the Dantien. For the people of India this centre is called the Hara.*

- 4) Relax your tongue in the roof of your mouth with the tip of the tongue touching behind the upper front teeth.
- 5) Breathe deeply and let go...rest in stillness and deep peace.
- 6) After several minutes, relax your hands into your lap. Breathe and slowly open your eyes.
- 7) Close by stretching your hands and arms, and then gently tap the top of your head to stimulate your brain and energy.



THE PSYCHOLOGY  
FOUNDATION  
OF CANADA

LA FONDATION  
DE PSYCHOLOGIE  
DU CANADA

[psychologyfoundation.org](http://psychologyfoundation.org)

## Acupressure Points for Managing Stress and Pain

*(hold 2 minutes in practice)*

### A. Emotional Heaviness and Depression

- **Base of Skull at Sides of the Head:** interlock hand and extend thumbs; place hands on back of head with thumbs pointing down, press thumbs at left and right sides of the base of skull in the indentations between muscles and bones

### B. Anxiety & Feeling Overwhelmed

- **Behind Head Hold:** one hand gently holds the forehead and other hand holds the base of the skull (energy of hands connects parts of brain related to memories and emotions)
- **Top of Shoulders Hold:** cross your arms and then with fingertips press on the tops of the shoulders (deltoid muscle). Embrace yourself in comfort

### C. Crisis & Faintness

- **Beneath Nose Press:** press firmly beneath nose with index finger or knuckle

### D. Constipation

- **Between Index and Middle Finger:** press this point with your thumb or index finger

## Pal Dan Gum: Eight 'Silken' Exercises

*From China & Korea to promote health, strength, longevity & spiritual awareness*

*Video: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsHP4Xqbiqw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsHP4Xqbiqw)*

*Description of Practices: [www.healing4u.com/pdf/PalDanGum.pdf](http://www.healing4u.com/pdf/PalDanGum.pdf)*

*Music: Touch the Sky*

- 1. Upholding Heaven:** releases toxic energy (Qi)  
**\*\*\* Shake off excess energy in between exercises**
- 2. Stretching the Bow and Arrow (Left then Right):** expands your chest to increase lung and heart capacity
- 3. Touching Heaven and Earth (L&R):** harmonizes energy from the sky and earth in your body
- 4. Looking Backwards (L&R):** 'Dry Crying' emotional release
- 5. Bending Head and Trunk support back (L&R):** increases strength, flexibility and vitality
- 6. Punching with Fists and Shout 'Ha':** releases excess fire (anger & frustration)
- 7. Roar like a Lion:** powerful release and energize for the day
- 8. Bend Over Deeply and Hang Arms,** then come up slowly - breath, relax and integrate learning from this practice.