

THE STRESS RESPONSE CYCLE

is your body's way of reacting and processing stress, and completing the stress response is the moment that your body realizes that you are now safe after being in danger.

A **complete stress cycle** consists of three stages or parts:

THE STRESSOR, THE REACTION, AND THE RESOLUTION.

1 THE STRESSOR

could be anything that brings out the feeling of stress, such as a bad day at work or an unexpected grade.



2 THE REACTION

to the stressor could be one of three: flight, meaning running away from the stressor, fight, which refers to reacting to it somehow, or freeze, which essentially means feeling stuck.



3 THE RESOLUTION

We need to complete the cycle and reach a **resolution** in order to feel better and recover from the stress. If not, we risk feeling stuck due to a dysregulated nervous system, which means that we still carry the stress in our bodies somehow after the stressor is gone (i.e. chronic activation of the stress response).



COMPLETE THE STRESS RESPONSE CYCLE TO PROTECT YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM AND KEEP IT FROM BECOMING DYSREGULATED.

Let's put this into perspective.

We experience a bad day at work due to having too many tasks and a tight deadline.

The stressor is the work that needs to be completed.

When we are experiencing **burnout**, we may feel a significantly lower drive to complete the things we need to do at work, so one response to this kind of stressor would be to

finish our tasks quickly and leave/avoid the workspace, which reflects the 'flight' reaction.



When we get home, we distract ourselves by watching TV but we still carry that stress with us from work. Or, we take one weekend off and come back to the same situation.

Instead of leaving that stress cycle open, we should **find a way to close it and find a resolution so our bodies can feel relief.**



7 WAYS TO CLOSE THE STRESS CYCLE



DISCOVER THE 7 WAYS TO CLOSE THE STRESS CYCLE



1 MOVE

Physical activity in any form for 20-60 minutes a day is one of the best go-tos for completing the stress cycle. This could include any form of physical movement you enjoy, i.e. biking, walking, running, playing a sport, jumping jacks, yoga, and so much more.



2 BREATHE

Doing breathing exercises, such as extending your exhale, could help regulate your nervous system to slow it down and feel more relaxed. One method is **box breathing**, or the **4x4x4 method**, which is this:

Inhale through your nose for four counts, hold it for another four, and then exhale through the mouth for eight. Do this a few times until you feel more at ease.



3 SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

Whether it be at work or otherwise, increasing your social connectedness makes you feel safe and more connected to the people around you. It is helpful to call a friend or hang out with a colleague at some point in the day, even if the interaction is short!



4 LAUGH

Laughing is one of the best ways to feel better in general, and laughing with friends or colleagues creates a feeling of safety and connectedness similar to #3.



5 SPEAK TO LOVED ONES

Speaking to loved ones, hugging, or any other form of affection is known to make us feel better because it instills a feeling of safety in us. It also makes us feel loved!



6 A GOOD CRY

Sometimes we simply have to let it out and have a good, therapeutic cry, as it helps us regulate our emotions and de-stress.



7 DO SOMETHING CREATIVE

Doing anything that requires a form of creativity, such as painting, writing, drawing, art, playing music, improvisation exercises, or joining theater, allows for the expression and exploration of our emotions in fun ways. It is also a form of self-expression!

