



# Three Stress Coping Techniques

By Stephanie Colo Manning

As a survival mechanism, stress triggers our “fight-or-flight” response, releasing hormones that substantially shift our body functions. This protects us during emergencies but can destroy our health when constantly activated. Stress coping techniques, therefore, are so important for re-balancing our hormones before wreaking havoc on our mind, body, and spirit.

Our goal for coping with stress can't be to “get rid of stress”. Our goal must be to face stress, develop relaxation techniques, and learn to adapt, which may mean changing the way we think and feel. Here are three relaxation/adaptation techniques that I hope you'll find helpful.

**Breathing Clouds Meditation** – A relaxation technique adapted from *The Essentials of Managing Stress*, by Brian Luke Seaward.

I find this helpful mid-day or when falling asleep. The purpose of this meditation, according to Seaward, is to “release, detach, and let go of thoughts and feelings that no longer serve your highest good.”

In this meditation, we synchronize two images with our breath. During inhale: white clouds symbolize clean, fresh air. During exhale: dark clouds symbolize stressful thoughts, unresolved feelings, anxieties, or excess energy.

- Close your eyes and take a slow, deep breath in through your nose, feeling your abdomen expand. As you exhale, feel a sense of calm throughout your body as your abdomen contracts. Repeat four times.
- Imagine that your next inhale is drawn from a beautiful cloud of clean, fresh air. Feel it circulate up to the top of your head and slowly down your spine.
- Imagine that your next exhale is a dark cloud of dirty air as you call to mind a current concern. Allow this tension to leave you as it moves up from your stomach, into your lungs, and out through your mouth.
- On the next inhale, feel the clean fresh air circulate through your entire body, cleansing every cell. Your exhale releases another dark cloud of concern.
- Repeat eight times, cleansing every cell as you let go of each thought that no longer serves you.
- Soon, notice the exhales becoming as clear as the inhales as you gain clarity and deeper relaxation.
- As you return to normal breathing think, “I am calm and relaxed.” Bring your awareness back to the room. Open your eyes to a soft gaze and feel relaxed but ready to continue your day.

**Crystal Cave Meditation** – A clarity-seeking technique adapted from *The Essentials of Managing Stress*, by Brian Luke Seaward.

This quiets the mind and provides clarity on an issue, decision, or question. The purpose of this meditation is to “seek council from your intuition,” says Seaward, referencing an ancient proverb: “When the student is ready, the teacher will come.”

- Close your eyes and take a slow, deep breath in through your nose. As you exhale, feel a sense of calm. Repeat four times.
- On your next inhale: Imagine standing at the bottom of a marble staircase. It is dark where you are but you see a brilliant light at the top.
- You climb the first step and feel inner peace as you accept yourself for all that you are.
- Climb the second step and feel peace towards your family and friends. Any differences and frustrations are unimportant right now.
- On the third step, you feel serenity within you and your higher self. You are lighter and relaxed, floating up the remaining steps.
- On the top step, you float into the light. Your body radiates this light and you feel love, support, and nurturing as you breathe it in.
- Next, you feel yourself floating down a crystal hallway. Light shines through the crystals forming tiny rainbows everywhere. You feel warmth and wonder.
- You approach a cave constructed of crystals forming tiny rainbows.
- On the left side of the crystal cave, you see a sunken floor. You float over to it and sit.
- You have arrived here in search of an answer. Deep in your heart is a question begging to be asked. This is why you have come.
- Take a slow, deep breath and look around.
- You feel the presence of a wise sage next to you. You immediately feel recognition, comfort, and compassion from within them.
- Think of the question. Take a slow, deep breath and find peace and comfort in the stillness.
- Then, quiet your mind and listen carefully for the answer. The answer is already within you; it will come as one of your own thoughts from your unconscious mind. Take some time. It may only be a seed to grow.
- Take a few slow, deep breaths and relax, contemplating the message you have received.

## Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)

EFT is sometimes used to relieve physical and emotional pain and to overcome self-sabotage and limiting beliefs that hold us back from achieving. Research has shown that EFT can reduce cortisol levels (our stress hormone) and improve anxiety, depression, and overall symptoms.

EFT is a form of Energy Psychology. Like acupuncture and its roots are in meridian-based energy, as well as

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psychology, and neuro-linguistic programming. The term “tapping” is sometimes used as a generic description.

Tina Craig, co-author of *The Gold Standard EFT Tutorial*, explains that difficult events in our lives create disruptions in our energy system that accumulate and become issues. The idea of EFT is that when we stimulate the meridian end points of our body (by tapping on them) while focusing on the cause of disturbance, we balance the energy system and resolve/remove the disturbance.

Specific phrases are commonly used to help us focus. For example, we may begin with: “Even though (problem statement), I deeply and completely accept myself.” We then use other statements to get to the core emotional issues related to the disturbance. Acknowledging these truths can help us clear them, effectively sending an “all clear” signal, calming the nervous system, and telling our fight-or-flight mechanism that we are safe. This can help us feel better and freer to respond to stressors in healthier ways.

It is easy to learn the mechanics of EFT and apply it for simple issues; you can learn the basics at <https://eftcertification.com>. A properly certified professional is recommended for more advanced cases.

## **Part II**

My next article will discuss more on the fight-or-flight response, how it can provoke health issues, and additional mechanisms for achieving balance.

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