



# *From Awareness to Empowerment: Navigating Mental Health with a Neurological Condition*

## *Coping with Stress Tip Sheet*

### *Self-Care*

*Remember, this is not something that should add stress to your plate. Instead, doing things intentionally and for pleasure is enough. This can be anything you already do, but with the mindset you're doing it and enjoying it, rather than rushing through it just to get it done. For example, eating or showering.*

*These steps can help you feel both emotionally and physically better*

- *Discover what makes you (or rediscover what used to make you) feel good. Something meaningful to you. And do it!*
  - *Remember this a long-term objective so pace yourself and do what you can and build on it over time. Every small effect counts.*
- *Stay socially engaged. Social isolation can worsen depression and chronic pain.*
- *Find adaptations for activities that have the most value to you. Maybe you can't do everything you used to do the same way, but can you find a way to enjoy the activity in another way?*

### *Butterfly Hugs*

*Crossing your arms over your chest, hooking your thumbs and fingers upwards towards your clavicle. Close your eyes (or downward gaze). Alternate the movement of your hands, slowing creating the movement of the moving wings of a butterfly.*

- *Breathe slowly and deeply*
- *Notice what is going on throughout your body and your mind (sensations, feelings or thoughts) without any judgement. Notice how they pass through, like clouds in the sky*
- *Continue for as long as you feel at ease.*

### *Mindfulness*

*To practice mindfulness you must:*

- *attend to one thing at a time (to the here and now)*
- *avoid judging*
- *do what works in the moment*
  - *inner: redirect excess energy*
  - *outer: stimulate attention*
- *All mindfulness activities are meant to be experienced. While engaging in the actual task the goal is to be aware of exactly what you're doing in the moment and notice how your body is responding to it.*



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### *Gratitude*

*Can you list 3-5 things every day you are grateful for? Remember not to over think it, anything counts.*

### *Calming Breath for Anxiety*

*The Relaxing Breath- this exercise is a natural tranquilizer for the nervous system. This exercise is subtle when beginning and become more powerful with practice and repetition.*

- *Exhale completely through your mouth (making a whoosh sound)*
- *Close your mouth and inhale through your nose counting to 4 seconds*
- *Hold your breath for 7 seconds*
- *Exhale completely to the count of 8 seconds*
- *Repeat this cycle no more than 4 times to start and working up to 8*

### *Motivating Breath for Low Mood*

*The Stimulating Breath- this is adapted from yoga techniques and the goal is to raise vital energy and increase alertness. You can develop heightened awareness and feel invigorated after completing this exercise.*

- *Inhale and exhale rapidly through your nose (keeping your mouth closed). These breaths in and out should equal in duration but be as short as possible*
- *This produces a quick movement of the diaphragm*
- *Try this in cycles of rapid breaths for up to 15 seconds followed by normal breaths and work up to one minutes of cycles*