

Mindfulness for Heart Health

WEBINAR OVERVIEW & RESOURCES

What does your mind have to do with your heart health? A lot, as it turns out. Here are key insights from a webinar by Amy Surface, PA-C, on the connection between your nervous system and your heart.

Chronic stress is a problem.

- Chronic stress is one risk factor in the development of heart disease.
- It may be associated with a variety of physical and psychological factors.
- Stress can lead to elevated levels of cortisol and adrenalin, increased blood pressure and cholesterol levels all may contribute to an overall risk profile.
- Untreated chronic stress can also lead to unhealthy coping habits, including physical inactivity, overwork, over-eating, and use of tobacco, alcohol or other substances.

What happens when you're stressed?

Your nervous system has two parts that can be engaged at any given time:

Parasympathetic Nervous System: "rest and repair"

The parasympathetic nervous system is responsible for energy building, food digestion, and assimilation. It functions to restore homeostasis (when "all is well") and is active when the body is at rest and recuperating. It causes a decrease in the heart rate, stimulates the normal peristaltic smooth muscle movement of the intestines, and promotes the secretion of all digestive juices and tropic (tissue building) hormones.

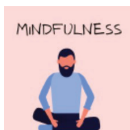
Sympathetic Nervous System: "fight, flight, freeze"

The sympathetic nervous system directs the body's rapid involuntary response to dangerous or stressful situations. A flash flood of hormones boosts the body's alertness and heart rate, sending extra blood to the muscles. Breathing quickens, delivering fresh oxygen to the brain, and an infusion of glucose is shot into the bloodstream for a quick energy boost.

Heart disease remains the leading cause of death in the U.S.

Mindfulness can help.

It's important to learn effective methods for long-term stress reduction as part of a comprehensive approach to prevent and treat heart disease.

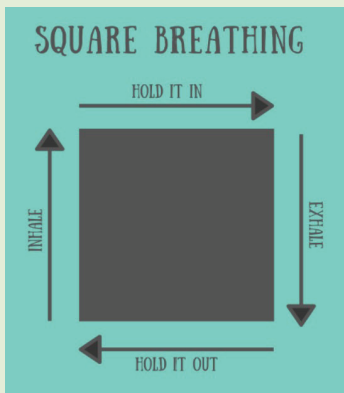


- Mindfulness is one of four pillars of lifestyle medicine*.
- It's one of best ways to calm yourself and return to a feeling of overall wellbeing.
- Whether you're walking, waiting, driving, washing dishes or eating—these are all great times to

come into the present moment, without judgement, and observe that moment with all your senses.

- Being tuned into your body allows you to be tuned into your health.
- The more you are in touch with your own heartbeat, the more you are able to regulate your emotions and override a nervous system that's stuck.

**Lifestyle Medicine includes mindfulness, nutrition, movement and other habits (sleep, smoking, alcohol and other substances) that can either add to or detract from good health.*



Practice "square" breathing.

1. Breathe in for a count of 4.
2. Hold for a count of 4.
3. Breathe out for a count of 4.
4. Hold out for a count of 4.

Do this three times and check in with yourself to see how you're feeling.

Additional Resources:

Books

- *Good Morning, I Love You* by Shauna Shapiro, PhD
- *Wherever You Go There You Are* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD
- *Full Catastrophe Living* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD
- *Mindfulness for Beginners* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD
- *Mindfulness for All* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD
- *The Healing Power of Mindfulness* by Jon Kabat-Zinn, PhD

Programs

- Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction Training (MBSR), an 8-week program
- Palouse Mindfulness <https://palousemindfulness.com/>

Apps

- Calm
- Insight Timer
- Headspace