



# emotional inflammation

## **Discover Your Triggers and Reclaim Your Equilibrium During Anxious Times**

### **STRATEGIES FOR ALL REACTOR TYPES**

The following essential cool-down measures are universally helpful for enhancing emotional regulation:

- Put yourself on a steady sleep schedule. Establish a consistent bedtime and awakening time that allows you to get the amount of sleep that helps you feel and function at your best (most likely something between seven and nine hours nightly). Stick with this schedule, both during the week and on the weekends. If you need to, you can vary your bedtime by an hour or two occasionally but try not to sleep in more than an hour (unless, of course, you're sick and need extra rest).
- Give yourself a digital curfew. At least ninety minutes before you plan to turn in for the night, shut down all your digital devices, dim the lights, and turn to a quiet, relaxing activity, such as reading, stretching, listening to music, or taking a warm bath. Doing this will help calm your sympathetic nervous system and set the stage for better sleep.
- Move your body and mind. Doing as little as ten minutes of aerobic exercise, such as brisk walking, jogging, cycling or swimming, every day can help prevent stress hormones from landing on the receptor sites that will make you feel tense or frayed at the edges. Remember: regular exercise also can relieve symptoms of anxiety and depression.
- Check your emotional pulse periodically. Try to identify how you're feeling with as much precision and specificity as possible; in other words, practice emotional granularity. Then address the way you're feeling: if you realize you're feeling tense, anxious, irritable, or downbeat, give yourself a brief time-out to engage in deep breathing exercises or meditation, to listen to soothing music, to treat yourself to a comforting scent, or to take a walk around the block.



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- Feed your gut bacteria well. This means consuming foods with live and active cultures, foods with plenty of fiber, fermented foods, and anti-inflammatory foods, such as colorful vegetables and fruits, whole and cracked grains, beans and legumes, nuts and extra virgin olive oil, and fish and shellfish every day. Think of this as a helpful way of calming physical and emotional inflammation from the inside out. Be sure to drink plenty of noncaffeinated fluids throughout the day, too.
- Correct your distorted thoughts. Get in the habit of paying attention to your thoughts and when you catch them getting tangled or twisted, take a moment to question their validity. Ask yourself how likely it is that your worst fears will happen or consider whether there's evidence that the negative messages you're giving yourself are true. If your thoughts are off base, correct them and put them on a more truthful (and helpful) course.
- Connect with nature—and awe. Take a short walk in the woods, a garden, or a park and soak in the sensory stimuli. Focus on the magical patterns that are inherent in trees and plants. Listen to the soothing sounds of nature—the wind rustling through the trees, birds singing or chirping, water gurgling in a brook. Gaze at the stars and planets in the night sky. Make a point to appreciate the awe and wonder in the natural world—and that you're a part of it.

For reactor-specific strategies, learn more in [Emotional Inflammation: Discover Your Triggers and Reclaim Your Equilibrium during Anxious Times](#) by Lise Van Susteren, MD and Stacey Colino. Order your copy today.

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