

How slow can you go?

Learning Center

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3 Ways to Center Oneself

Do you ever find yourself having difficulty focusing on the assignment you're working on? Maybe you're an athlete struggling to get your head in the game but feeling distracted by the roar of fans. Trying to remain focused can be a challenge. This is where **centering** comes in. Centering is a meditation and visualization technique that supports retaining focus, promoting relaxation, and relieving anxiety (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Hold in your mind the image of a pendulum. The arm of the pendulum moves back and forth, going from one extreme to the other, slowly it loses momentum, and settles in the middle. When feeling distracted or anxious, your thoughts also tend to move all over the place. Once you recognize this pattern and become mindful about focusing on your breath and making a conscious effort to relax, your thoughts can begin to slow until they settle into stillness.

Modern-day centering techniques use mindful breathing to bring attention to one thing at a time, limit mental distractions, and restore physical balance (Rogerson & Hrycaiko, 2002).

Techniques for Centering Oneself

Here are some centering techniques to try (e.g., Laurie & Tucker, 1983):

1. **Focus on the breath.** The simplest and most fundamental centering technique is conscious or mindful breathing. When we deal with stressful situations or racing thoughts, we may displace our ability to breathe at a slow and steady pace. If you notice yourself feeling off-centered or scatterbrained, pause for a moment. Take a deep breath in,

hold it for a few seconds, and then gently exhale. Repeat this process until your heart stops racing and you notice that you feel calm.

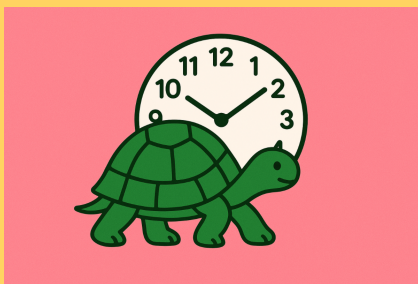
2. **Ground your feet.** Sometimes when we feel overstimulated, we forget to pay attention to the rest of our bodies. One way to combat this feeling is by grounding our feet. Take a moment to stand tall, firmly plant both of your feet on the ground, and feel your energy slowly move down from your head to your feet. This grounding technique can help release tension in your head, shoulders, and neck. You may want to try this exercise on the floor in your home or on the grass outside.
3. **Try journaling.** Sometimes thoughts can be a distraction, making it difficult to carry out simple tasks or maintain a balanced mood. One technique to return to your center is by quieting your thoughts with daily journaling. Whether you have a journal or prefer to use the notes app on your phone, putting thoughts, problems, fears, or frustrations onto paper can help release the negativity from your mind.

In Conclusion

It is normal to feel overwhelmed from time to time. However, when stress starts to overpower one's mind and body, making one feel off-centered or distracted, practicing mindfulness can bring one back to his/her center.

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Aging is a process. One that can be slowed to a crawl.

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