ABOUT THIS TOOL

Audience
- Physicians/Practitioners, Nursing Staff, and Allied Health Professionals
- Personal Care Workers and Support Technicians

Description
Quick reset tools provide brief, practical ways to interrupt that stress cycle during a shift.

When to Use
In a state of:
- High alert
- Holding in emotions
- Fast thinking and decision-making

Quick Reset: Pre-Room Breath

NEW YORK STATE | Office of Mental Health | New York State Trauma-Informed Network & Resource Center

WORKPLACE STRESS

Healthcare workers often move quickly from one patient to the next. There is usually little time to pause or reset. Taking a short breath before entering a patient's room can help calm the body and mind. This quick pause helps you slow your breathing, relax your muscles, and be more present with the patient. Even a few seconds of steady breathing can help you communicate more clearly and avoid carrying stress from one patient to the next.

WHY THIS WORKS

Recognizing these common stress patterns helps normalize what healthcare workers experience every day. When the body stays in a constant "high alert" mode, it can lead to fatigue, tension, and emotional overload without us fully noticing it. Simply identifying these states can increase self-awareness and create a moment to pause and reset. This awareness makes it easier to use brief calming strategies, support emotional regulation, and prevent stress from building up over time.

THE PRACTICE

Before entering the room:

1. Inhale for 4 seconds
2. Exhale for 6 seconds
3. Soften your eyes and relax your face

WHY THIS HELPS

This brief pause activates the body's relaxation response, which lowers heart rate and reduces physical tension. When your nervous system is calmer, your voice and body language naturally become steadier and less reactive. This helps you focus on the patient in front of you instead of lingering stress from previous tasks or interactions. A calmer tone and clearer attention can improve communication, reduce misunderstandings, and support more compassionate, patient-centered care.

Resources:
Find additional wellness information on the NYS Trauma Informed Network and Resource Center at traumainformedny.org

Looking to go deeper? Explore BREATH-BODY-MIND™ (BBM) for weekly breathwork practice, expert tips, and a welcoming community. Check out the website here for additional details.

Sources:
Lehrer, P., & Gevirtz, R. (2014). Heart rate variability biofeedback. *Applied Psychophysiology and Biofeedback.*
Stephen Porges (2011). *The Polyvagal Theory.* Norton.