3-Step Machine Stress Pause

NEW YORK STATE | Office of Mental Health

New York State Trauma-Informed Network & Resource Center

ABOUT THIS TOOL

Audience

- Production Workers
- Machine Operators
- Assemblers
- Packing Operators
- Maintenance Technician
- Material Handlers

Description

This reset helps operators pause, calm their body, and follow a clear sequence before restarting the machine. The goal is to improve safety, reduce errors, and support clear thinking during unexpected equipment problems.

When to Use

Use this after a machine jam, alarm, stoppage, or any mechanical error.

WORKPLACE STRESS

When a machine jams, alarms, or shows a mechanical error, it can create stress, urgency, and frustration. In these moments, people are more likely to rush or make mistakes. This is a simple safety and stress-management procedure for operators using a Computer Numerical Control (CNC) machine or other equipment.

THE PRACTICE

1. Stop

- Pause immediately
- Step away from the machine if safe to do so

2. Breathe

- Inhale slowly for **4 seconds**
- Exhale slowly for **6 seconds**
- Repeat once or twice

3. Reset

- Check the required safety or troubleshooting checklist
- Confirm conditions are safe before restarting

WHY THIS HELPS

Machine interruptions can trigger stress because they feel urgent or disruptive. Stress can narrow attention and increase the risk of unsafe actions, such as skipping steps or restarting too quickly.

Taking a short pause helps reset the nervous system. This improves focus, supports safer decision-making, and helps ensure proper procedures are followed before restarting equipment.

WHY THIS WORKS

- Prevents stress-driven mistakes during high-pressure moments
- Reduces risk of unsafe reactions or rushed decisions
- Supports clear thinking after unexpected machine interruptions
- Reinforces safe, consistent operating procedures
- Helps operators return to work with focus and control

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:
This tool was informed by research on human factors in industrial safety, OSHA safety pause practices, and stress-regulation techniques such as controlled breathing.