

## Stress after Stroke: Resources for Persons with Stroke and their Caregivers

The resources listed below provide information and strategies that can help with post stroke challenges such as stress.

The first resource is the video [Stress after Stroke](#) (see below). Once you have watched this video, more information on this topic can be found by clicking on the links below. To access the links, click the underlined titles.

### Video

- [Stress after stroke](#)

**Source:** Heart and Stroke Foundation Canadian Partnership for Stroke Recovery

### Supporting Resources

#### General Information

- [Your Stroke Journey: A Guide for People Living with Stroke](#)

This booklet provides information on stroke and its effects. It features tips and strategies to address various challenges. Available to download or in hardcopy format.

**Source:** Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

- [Managing Your Stress](#)

This webpage provides tips on how to reduce and manage stress. You can also take the [5 minute stress test](#).

**Source:** Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

- [Coping with Stress](#)

A document that includes information on stress and how to cope with it.

**Source:** Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

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- [Stress](#)

This webpage provides an overview of the signs and symptoms of stress, the causes and risk factors and information on diagnosis, treatment and strategies on how to cope with stress.

**Source:** Canadian Mental Health Association

- [Coping with Stress and Anxiety](#)

This webpage provides coping strategies and personal assessment tools to help you manage your stress and anxiety caused by COVID-19.

**Source:** Canadian Mental Health Association

- [Stress Management](#)

This webpage features information on the causes and effects of stress and videos of strategies to reduce stress.

**Source:** My Health.Alberta.ca

- [Stress and Stroke](#)

This webpage includes various documents about stroke and stress.

**Source:** Stroke Foundation - Australia

- [Self Help 4 Stroke](#)

This self-management website for people with stroke. Topics include emotional support, coping with set-backs and keeping well.

**Source:** Self Help 4 Stroke

## **One to One Professional Support**

- [BounceBack® Program](#)

A free skill-building program designed to help adults manage low mood, mild to moderate depression and anxiety, stress or worry. Delivered over the phone with a coach and through online videos.

**Source:** Canadian Mental Health Association

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## Exercise and Wellness

- [Community Exercise Programs](#)

This website contains information on evidence-based exercise programs that might be offered in your community.

**Source:** Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada

- [Exercise & Wellness Videos for People with Mobility Challenges](#)

This document contains several links to videos on exercises as well as mindfulness and relaxation.

**Source:** Toronto Rehab, University Health Network

- [Stroke Specific Exercise Programme](#)

A series of 12 videos to help you be more active at home. There are different levels of exercises, which you can follow at your pace.

**Source:** Stroke Association – United Kingdom

- [Being Active](#)

This webpage provides tips on becoming more active, including getting started, moving forward and keeping going.

**Source:** Self Help 4 Stroke

- [Aerobic Exercise after Stroke](#)

This resource provides aerobic activity recommendations for people at any point in their recovery from stroke.

**Source:** Heart and Stroke Foundation Canadian Partnership for Stroke Recovery

## Caregiver Resources

- [Taking Care of Yourself](#)

This webpage for caregivers provides tips on how to care for yourself and provides links to self-care videos.

**Source:** The Ontario Caregiver Organization

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- [Stroke4Carers: Stress](#)

This e-learning website is designed for caregivers but can be helpful to persons living with stroke.

**Source:** Stroke4Carers, National Health Service-Scotland

- [A Caregiver's Guide to Stroke Recovery](#)

This guide contains caregiving resources and a caregiver survival checklist. It is also available in [French](#).

**Source:** March of Dimes Canada

## Mobile Apps

- [Mental Health App Library](#)

A list of apps for sleep, anxiety, depression, and relaxation.

**Source:** Scarborough Health Network

- Search the mobile app store on your smart phone or tablet to find free and available apps to help manage and reduce your stress and anxiety. Suggested search terms – stress, antistress, mindfulness, meditation.

## Audio Links

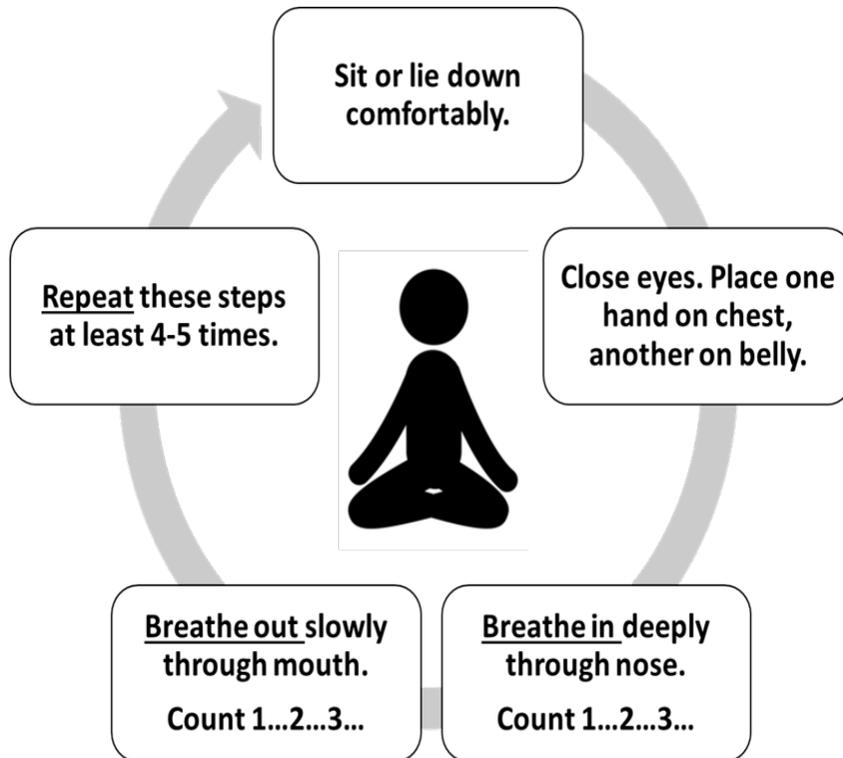
The following is a list of audio tracks to help with mindfulness and relaxation.

- [Calm breathing audio](#)
- [Breathing bubble](#)
- [Deep Breathing](#)
- [Progressive muscle relaxation](#)

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## Deep Breathing



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## Sensory Grounding

1. Sit comfortably in a quiet space.
2. Take several deep breaths.
3. Notice, say, or think of:



5 - things you **see**



4 - things you **hear**



3 - things you can **touch**



2 - things you **smell**



1 - thing you **taste**

### Modify this exercise:

- For aphasia/word finding challenges: Visualize items in your mind instead of saying them. Look at them in the room.
- For vision challenges: Skip this step, **or** focus on what is directly in your field of view, **or** imagine objects in the room.
- For hearing challenges: Skip this step, **or** notice objects in the room that you know make a sound.
- For sensory tactile challenges/numbness: Skip this step, **or** use the unaffected side of your body to touch objects.
- For problems with taste/smell: Skip this step, **or** sip a cool glass of water/hot tea, and notice the temperature and feel.
- Skip any step that causes pain, discomfort, or frustration.

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## Quick Muscle Tense and Release

1. Sit comfortably in a quiet space
2. Take several deep breaths
3. Tense (squeeze) and release (let go) different muscle groups.
  - a. Notice what relaxed feels like.
4. As you relax, say or think “relax,” “calm,” or “safe.”
5. How to tense four muscle groups:
  - **Face** – wrinkle your forehead
  - **Shoulders** – shrug shoulders to your ears
  - **Hands & arms** – clench fists and lift arms
  - **Legs & feet** – lift feet and point toes to ceiling

### Modify this exercise:

- If you have pain, numbness, or difficulty moving one or more of your limbs, try the exercise using only the unaffected side.
- If tensing causes pain or discomfort, simply bring your awareness to each muscle group, notice what you feel, and imagine that muscle relaxing and a sense of calm in your body.
- Skip any step that causes pain, discomfort, or frustration and ask a medical professional how to modify safely.

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## Local Resources

Search [www.thehealthline.ca](http://www.thehealthline.ca) or **Call 211** to find local programs and services to address stress. Suggested search terms- Counselling, Stress, Mood, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction.

### NOTES:

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## Acknowledgement

This information was compiled by the Ontario Regional Stroke Networks' Community and Long -Term Care Group. It is based on the Stroke Self-Management Video Series Resource Worksheet: Stress after Stroke, which was developed by the Calgary Stroke Program's Early Supported Discharge Program/Alberta Health Services, Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada, and Heart and Stroke Foundation Canadian Partnership for Stroke Recovery. Modifications have been made with permission.

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