

# Creating Moments of Renewal in Times of Stress

## (Dhamma version)

The conditions that create stress, (dukkha), in our lives are constantly in action: our busy-ness, having to deal with many tasks and demands, constantly encountering events that we did not ask for, the demands for our time, the inconsiderate comment that stings, a period of extra work duties, dealing with people who are also in stress – and our reactivity to all of this. Our emotional, mental, and bodily reactivity creates a cycle of stress factors that reinforce each other.

We need moments throughout the day to remind ourselves that beneath the swirl of the busy day, there is the possibility of a moment to renew and refresh ourselves and to break the escalating effects of the cycle of stress reactions.

This RENEWAL practice can be done in 1 minute, 3 minutes, 5 minutes, or longer if you have the space. If you have time to go to the restroom, you have time to practice a moment of RENEWAL.

**Re-connect to your Breath.** The breath is always here in every moment of life. When we focus with mindful awareness on how it feels to take a breath and where we feel the breath in the body: the nostrils, the throat, the chest, the ribs, or the belly, to name a few locations, we become more grounded at that moment. Mindful awareness of the breath conditions and calms both body and mind. In that moment of 10 or 20 breaths, we are not obsessed with our thoughts. (Whole Body Breath Awareness)

**Expand your awareness to the whole body.** The breath is part of the body, but what else is happening? The body constantly sends messages about hunger or fullness, warmth or coolness, tension or relaxation. Tightness and muscle tension may be the result of our stress reactivity. Give the body permission to release any tension you are holding. Does the body need to move? Is it asking for a break? (Calming the body)

**Notice all of your experience, including emotions and thoughts, with interest but without judgment.** What is pleasant or unpleasant about this moment? (Second tetrad, mindfulness of feeling tone). What mood is present? How distracted or collected is the mind? How restless or at ease do we feel? What hindrances are present? (Third tetrad, mindfulness of mind). We can easily judge ourselves for feeling a certain way or having a negative thought. What story is going on in our thoughts? (Fourth tetrad, mindfulness of mental objects and processes). Our thoughts may be reflecting self-judging. Being hard on ourselves is stressful.

**Experience everything in this moment with kindness and compassion.** To be human is to be part of nature. It's not easy being a human being, subject to the stresses of daily life. (First Noble Truth, Dukkha). Acknowledge whatever idea or expectation you are holding onto (Second Noble Truth), and do the best you can at this moment to let go of what is not serving your ease and well-being. Even if the energy of your mental and emotional habits is too strong to release in the moment, remind yourself that you are deserving of happiness and ease and you have the capacity for joy, love, and ease. Relating to our experience with kindness and compassion are the antidote to self-judgment (Third and Fourth Noble Truths).

**Witness your experience without owning it.** The world is more welcoming when we see the passing show of emotions, thoughts, and sensations as part of Nature. A natural unfolding of our human experience rather than my frustration, my sadness, my irritation, and my sense of overwhelm. Learn to be an observer rather than the owner of reactivity.

**Accept this moment as it is.** We may want things to be different now, but we often add an extra dose of resistance to stressful or unpleasant experiences by pushing away and avoiding what we don't want. Sometimes the resistance is worse than the original physical or emotional pain or discomfort.

**Let go of holding on to anything as this moment transforms into the next moment.** This moment will not last. That is true whether we find this moment pleasant or stressful. Recycling and rehashing our stories of stress perpetuates the stress cycle. The next moment is an opportunity to start fresh. When you finish this moment of RENEWAL, do just that!

(to shorten the acronym, you can use RENEW, with the last W representing "Witness, Accept, and Let go, as this moment passes and the next one arrives.")