

# Six-second mini-relaxation

## MANAGING STRESS



The "quieting reflex" is a six-second mini-relaxation technique that is designed to counteract emergency stress reactions. It relieves muscle tightening, jaw clenching, breath holding, and activation of the sympathetic nervous system.

To be effective, it should be practiced frequently throughout the day, and at the moment a stressful situation arises. It can be done with your eyes opened or closed.

- **Step 1:** Become aware of what is annoying you: a ringing phone, a sarcastic comment, the urge to smoke, a worrisome thought—whatever. This becomes the cue to start the quieting reflex.
- **Step 2:** Repeat the phrase, "alert mind, calm body" to yourself.
- **Step 3:** Smile inwardly with your eyes and your mouth. This stops facial muscles from making a fearful or angry expression. The inward smile is more a feeling than something obvious to anyone observing you.
- **Step 4:** Inhale slowly to the count of three, imagining that the breath comes in through the bottom of your feet. Then exhale slowly. Feel your breath move back down your legs and out through your feet. Let your jaw, tongue, and shoulder muscles go limp.

Practice the quieting reflex technique and it will get easier to do. You can also combine this relaxation technique with others.

This technique and much more are available at [kp.org/mindbody](http://kp.org/mindbody).