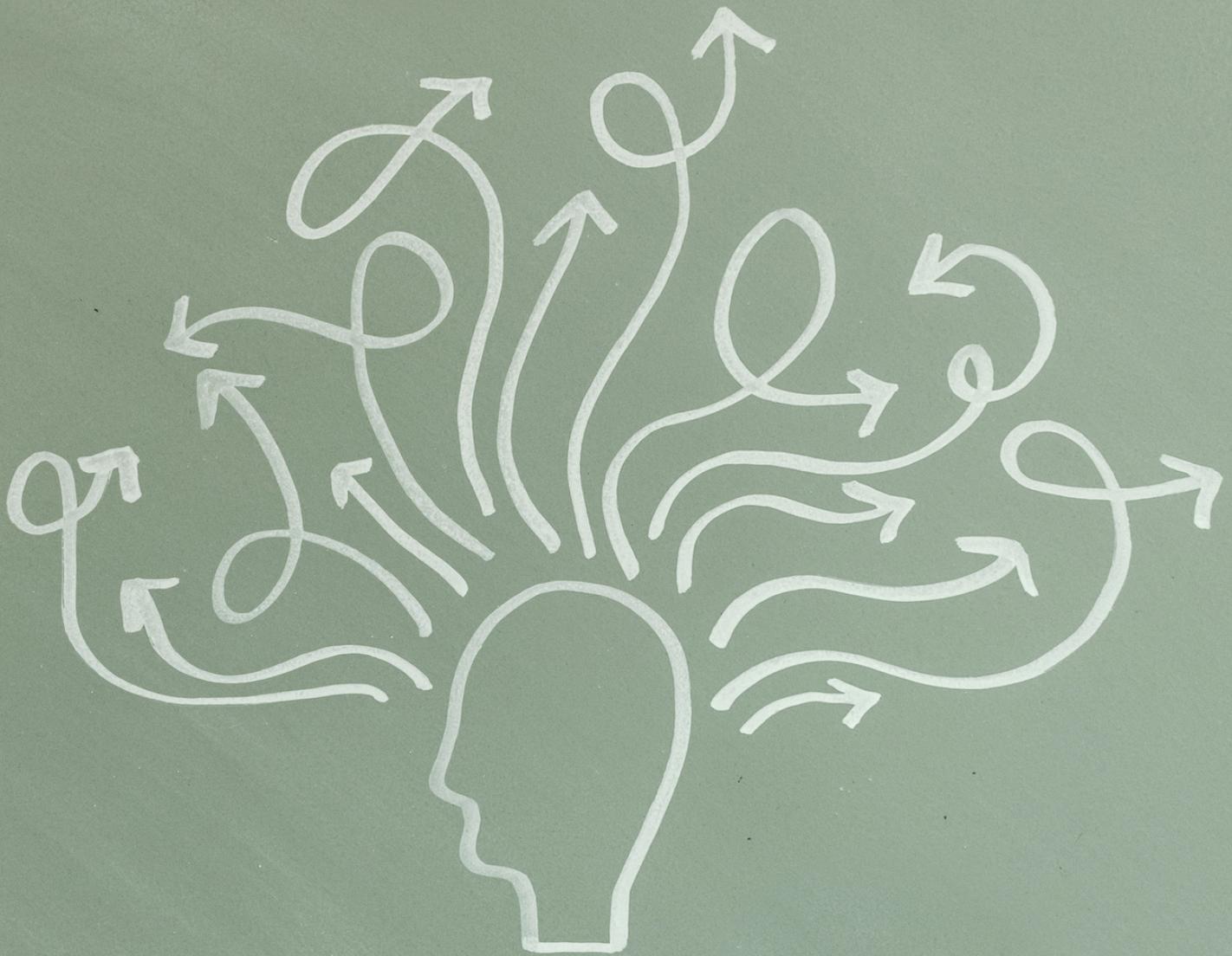


MINDFULNESS AND BREATHING TECHNIQUES FOR EXAM STRESS



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Video Support

Introduction

Mindfulness Practices

Why Mindfulness Helps With Exam Stress

Mindfulness means being present and fully engaged in the moment. When you focus on your breathing, your body sensations, or your immediate surroundings, you create a circuit break for stress. This helps you interrupt negative thought patterns and allows your brain to stay calm.

These practices can help you:

- **Lower anxiety** and stop your mind from overthinking.
- **Improve concentration** so your revision becomes more effective.
- **Calm your nerves** both before you start and while you are sitting the exam.

How it Works for Your Brain:

- **Quiets the Alarm:** When you feel blank, it's just your brain's alarm system taking over. Mindfulness turns the alarm off so you can access your memory again.
- **Clears the Clutter:** Stress fills your head with what-ifs. These tools clear that mental noise, leaving more room for the facts you've studied.
- **Response over Reaction:** Instead of panicking at a hard question, you learn to pause. This keeps you in control and focused on the solution.

Exam stress creates noise that stops you from thinking clearly. Mindfulness is the reset button.

The Mindset Flip: Reframing Your Thoughts

When you are under pressure your brain often tells you things that are not true. It likes to imagine the worst thing that could happen before you've even started.

The **Mindset Flip** is simply catching a negative thought and swapping it for something that is actually true. It stops your mind from racing so you can just get back to work.

You are not lying to yourself, you are choosing to focus on a fact instead of a fear. This keeps you calm and in control.

How to do it:

The Thought: "If I mess this up, I'm a failure."

The Flip: "This exam is just one task on one day. It doesn't define who I am or what I'm capable of."

The Thought: "I can't remember anything, my mind is blank."

The Flip: "The information is there. My brain just feels crowded. I'll take a breath and come back to this question in a moment."

The Thought: "Everyone else seems fine and is writing faster than me."

The Flip: "I'm only seeing their 'outside.' I'm sticking to my own pace and my own plan."

The Thought: "I'm shaking and my heart is racing; I'm losing it."

The Flip: "This is just adrenaline. My body is powering up to help me stay alert. I'll use my 'Box Breath' to steady myself."

The Thought: "I should have studied more; it's too late now."

The Flip: "I can't change the past, but I can control the paper in front of me right now. I'll focus on the marks I can get."

The Thought: "This question is impossible."

The Flip: "This is just a challenge to solve. I'll break it down and start with the parts I do recognise."

These are examples of what you might be thinking. Please write or say them in your own words so they feel real to you.

The 24 Hour Reset

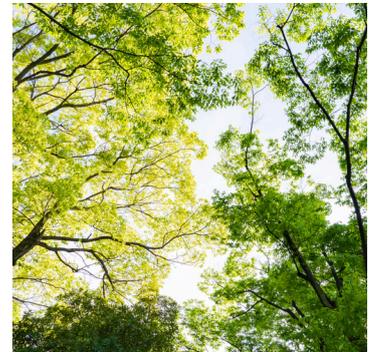
✓ THE NIGHT BEFORE:

It's important you put the books away at a reasonable time. If you keep studying until you go to bed, your brain stays in emergency mode and you won't sleep well. Your brain actually stores what you've learned while you sleep, so getting to bed is part of the revision. If you're worrying about a specific topic, write it down on a piece of paper and leave it on your desk. This tells your brain: "I've noted it, I don't need to carry it tonight."



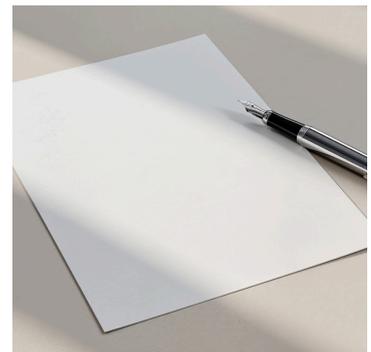
✓ THE MORNING:

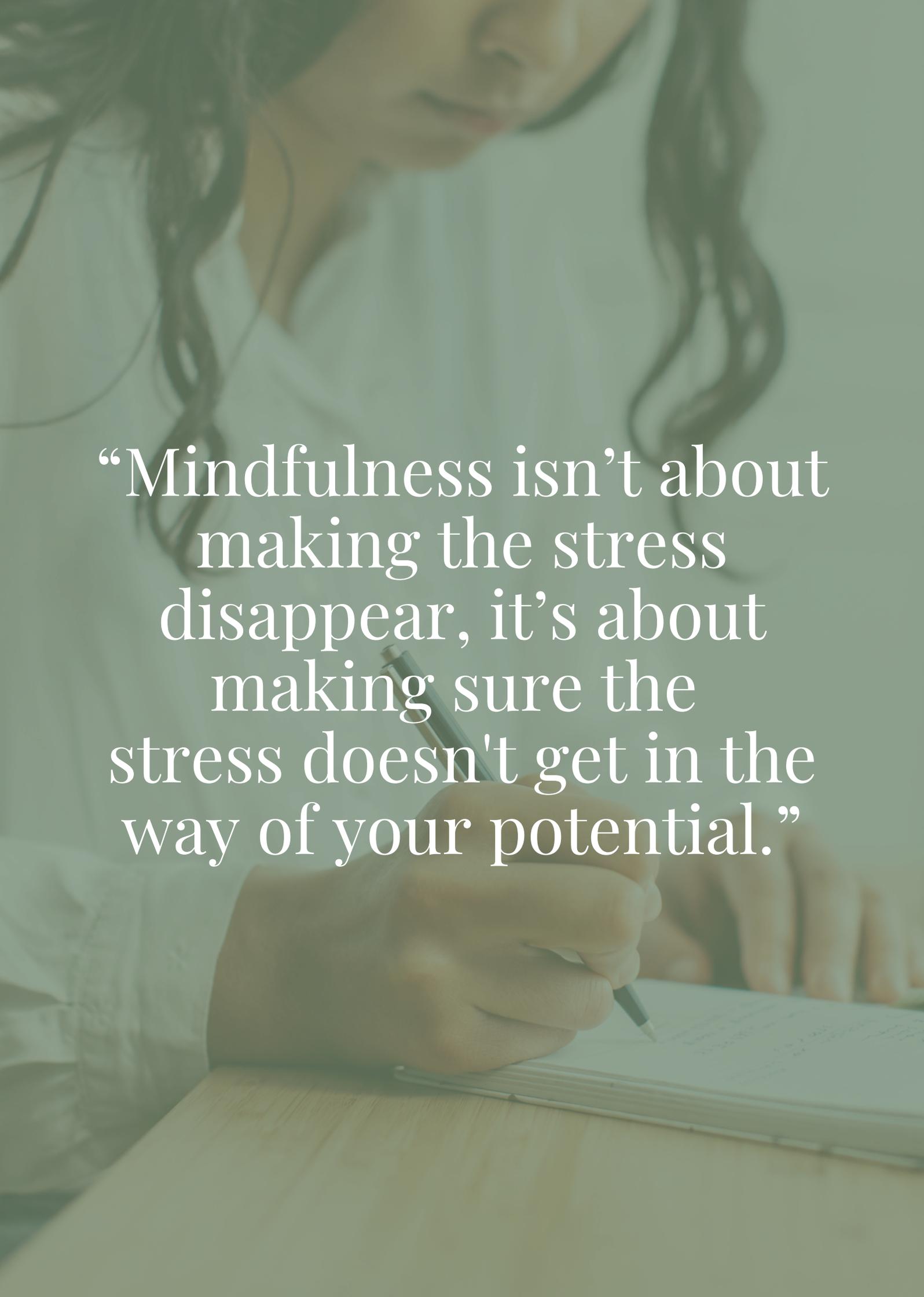
Your goal today isn't to learn new things, it's to create the best conditions for your brain to work. Even if you feel a bit sick or nervous, eat something. Your brain is an organ that needs energy to function. Check your bag before you leave the house. Knowing you have your pens, calculator, and water bottle stops panic. Being prepared physically helps you feel prepared mentally. Don't try to cram a new topic in over your breakfast. Trying to learn something new at the last minute just creates mental clutter.



✓ THE ENTRANCE:

The moment you sit down is your final reset. Use it to switch from waiting to doing. As soon as you find your desk, don't touch your pen yet. Sit back and take one long, slow breath. This 5-second pause breaks the tension and signals to your brain that you are in control. While you breathe, tell yourself, The work is done, I'm just here to put it on the page.



A person with long dark hair is sitting at a wooden desk, writing in a notebook with a pen. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. The quote is centered in white text.

“Mindfulness isn’t about making the stress disappear, it’s about making sure the stress doesn’t get in the way of your potential.”

The In-Exam Resets

These are quick, in the moment practices to help you settle your nervous system before and during the exam.

- **The Box Breath** (For your nervous system)

If you feel your heart racing or your mind starting to loop, stop for 60 seconds.

Inhale for 4, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4. Repeat this twice. This tells your brain you are safe so your thinking brain can come get back to work.

- **The Squeeze** (For physical tension)

If you feel restless or jittery use this physical reset button. It is completely invisible to others. Under your desk, tightly clench your fists and toes for five seconds. Hold it, then suddenly release. This moves your muscles from stress to release instantly.

- **The Focus Flip** (For a mental block)

If you look at a question, go blank and panic, look away from your paper and find one neutral object (like the clock) and silently name three factual details about it. (e.g the colour, the shape, the sound). This stops the brain from spiraling so you can look back at the paper with a calm, sharp mind.

Quick Refresher

The Box Breath: Inhale 4, Hold 4, Exhale 4, Hold 4.

The Squeeze: Tense for 5 seconds, then let go.

The Focus Flip: Name 3 facts about a neutral object.

The Revision Break Resets

Use these three things when you take a break from studying. They help you recharge so you don't feel burned out.

- **The Body Relax**

Sit or lie down. Imagine a light moving from your toes up to your head. As it moves, let every muscle it touches go floppy and relax. This clears the background noise in your head.

- **The Short Walk**

Go outside for a few minutes. Don't check your phone. Just notice how your feet hit the ground and how the air feels. It helps clear your head and stops you from feeling overwhelmed by your books.

- **The Quick Stretch**

Stand up and reach your arms as high as you can, then roll your shoulders. Stretching gets rid of the tension in your neck and back, which makes it easier for you to focus when you sit back down.

Study Break Recap

Quiet the noise: Use the Body Relax to settle your mind.

Clear your head: Take a short walk without your phone.

Release tension: Stretch to make focusing easier.

A Note for Parents

Your role isn't to teach the material, it's to help your child manage the pressure. Please do it with them. Doing a Box Breath or a Short Walk together makes it a shared habit.

If they spiral, remind them that a racing heart or a blank mind is just a physical response. It's not a sign that they are failing.

If you don't know what to say, just sit with them and take a calm breath yourself. Your calm is the best gift you can give their nervous system.

Quick Phrases for Parents:

- "I can see this feels like a lot. Let's do a 60-second reset together."
- "The information is in there, it's just crowded. Let's step away for five minutes."
- "I'm here. We can handle this."

The Finish Line. After the Paper

The moment you walk out of the exam room, the pressure starts to lift. It's normal to feel a mix of relief and nerves. Here is how to handle the next few hours so you can actually relax.

The Friend Chat

You're probably going to talk to your friends about the paper, it's how most people let off steam. Go ahead and talk about the hard parts or laugh about the weird questions. But once you've had that initial chat, try to change the subject. Replaying every single answer for hours won't change your mark, but it will definitely drain your energy for tomorrow.

The Physical Switch

When you get home, do something to fun. This tells your brain that the exam part of your day is officially over and the rest part has started. You need that clear break before you even think about your next subject.

The Paper is Just a Paper

No matter how it went great, okay, or really tough remember, an exam is just a snapshot of one day. It doesn't show your personality, your kindness, or how successful you are going to be in the long run. Take a breath and let it go. You did your best in the moment, and that is enough.

A Note from Victoria

The hard part is over. Now, your only job is to be kind to yourself and get some rest. You've earned it.

The C.A.L.M. Reset.

The 10-second start for when you sit at your desk.

You can't take notes into the room, but you can take this. Use it the moment you sit down, before you even touch your pen. It's a simple way to settle in before you open the paper.

C — Clear your hands

Place your palms flat on the desk or rest them in your lap. Do not pick up your pen yet. This simple physical move stops the panic feeling and tells your nervous system that you are in control.

A — Air

Take one long, slow breath in through your nose and out through your mouth. This is your body's off switch for stress. It clears the mental fog so you can read the first question properly.

L — Let go

Notice where you are holding tension, usually your shoulders, your neck, or your jaw. Intentionally drop your shoulders and loosen your grip. Let the weight of your body settle into the chair.

M — Message

Say your internal script to yourself:

"The work is done. Now I'm just here to put it on the page."