

Create Your Balance 🏛️ Easy Strategies For Self-Renewal in a Chaotic World 🧑🎤

By Joe B.



1. Introduction ❤️

If you've ever found yourself in a fog or a fuzzy-minded funk, you know what it feels like to be burnt out, stressed, or plain disconnected from yourself.

Did you know that [a recent survey](#) of 2,000 American adults found that a quarter experienced burnout before the age of 30, with the average peak age being 42? Currently, 42% of respondents feel more stressed than average.

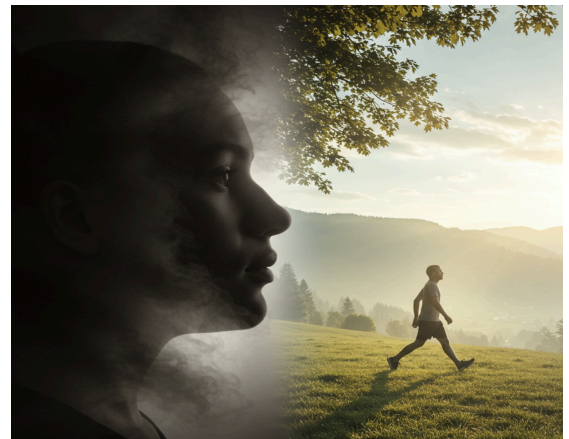
Not only does chronic stress make life less enjoyable, but it's also been linked to serious health issues. A [recent study published](#) in the American Academy of Neurology suggests that chronic stress may increase the risk of ischemic stroke in younger women by 78%.

I can think back to several different periods when I felt stressed and in a total or partial funky fog. If you are feeling symptoms of chronic stress and burnout, you are not alone.

It's important to remind ourselves that this is a normal occurrence, especially in today's chaotic world.

Recognizing the funk is the first step. Looking at the situation for what it is. Feeling the feelings. Don't try to cover up icky feelings or attempt to anesthetize the situation.

After seeing yourself in the fog, no matter how blurry the image may be, then you can start to take steps to step out into the clear skies. One way through the fog is by taking a holistic and multi-pronged health approach.



This article will explore a multi-faceted, holistic, self-renewal process which will give you many options. The approach I'm going to offer you will incorporate mind, body, and soul. It is not necessary to do every single thing in this article. Putting pressure to self-renew perfectly will throw up another blockade. Take what you will from the suggestions, make it your own, and take your own consistent daily step (small or giant) toward re-balancing.

Before we get into our self-renewal suggestions, we'd like to gift you a free ebook. Every Friday we send our members 1 practical and thought-provoking email called the Friday Check-In. Want us to stay in touch with you? [Click here to receive the Friday Check-In](#) and we'll also send you our ebook "Seize Your Day" for free!—we promise not to spam your inbox!

2. The Mind: Reframing Stress 😊 Through Awareness & Mindfulness 😎

Again, it's super important that you become aware of your current mental and physical state in order to "feel into the feelings" and be able to move through and out of disharmony.

Try and reframe the idea of stress as bad. Let's shift our perspective on stress and see it as a catalyst for growth, something that can help to add flavor and contours to life. Just like lifting weights breaks down muscles, and rest and whole foods fuel builds the muscles back up stronger, so too can eu-stress help us to build ourselves back up healthier.

Eustress (Eu meaning 'good' in Greek), is distinct from distress. [Distress can lower our immune system](#) and cause us to look older than our age. Stress is important for survival and living a rich life.

Examples of eustress:

- The good nerves you feel before a team meeting, presentation, or performance
- The excitement before a wedding or event
- The stress a student-athlete has before a big game
- The butterflies you have before meeting a blind date
- Stress you have before an exam you've prepared for
- The anticipation you have before seeing a person you haven't seen in forever



Chronic stress is not great for our system. But those examples of eustress can be beneficial for making us stronger and more resilient. We can actually shift our mindset to view stressful times as a challenge instead of a threat.

Here are some mindfulness practices that will allow us to look at the stress and feel the effects from a zoomed out perspective.

Studies over the last 20 years show that mindfulness meditation, which some people use to reduce stress and improve health, has many benefits for the mind, body, and thinking skills. [New brain scan research](#) is beginning to reveal which parts of the brain help create these positive effects.



Here are 5 easy to moderate mindfulness techniques you can try to lower your stress and improve your thinking:

1. ****Body Scan Meditation****: This practice involves mentally scanning your body from head to toe, bringing awareness to any sensations without judgment. Research indicates that body scan meditation can enhance emotional regulation and reduce stress.

2. **Mindful Breathing**: Focusing on your breath, observing each inhale and exhale, can anchor you in the present moment. Studies have shown that mindful breathing practices can decrease anxiety and improve overall emotional well-being. We'll get into all types of interesting breathing techniques in the next section.

3. **Walking Meditation**: Combining mindfulness with gentle movement, walking meditation encourages awareness of each step and the contact of your feet with the ground. This technique has been associated with improved blood flow, digestion, and reduced symptoms of depression.

4. **Loving-Kindness Meditation**: This method focuses on cultivating feelings of love and compassion towards oneself and others. Research suggests that loving-kindness meditation can increase empathy and reduce negative emotions.

5. **Mindful Eating**: Paying full attention to the experience of eating—such as the taste, texture, and aroma of food—can foster a healthier relationship with food and promote better digestion.

3. Breathwork

Breathwork is a wonderful and free tool to wake ourselves up to what the heck is going on inside and around us. These practices can have a positive effect on our nervous system. Breathwork can put you into a state of more resourcefulness. Let's learn how to breathe deeply into full aliveness.

One type of breathwork called slow breathing can help improve the body's automatic functions, brain activity, and emotional balance. Research shows that [slow breathing is connected to better heart rate control](#) and mental well-being.

Breathwork encompasses various techniques that focus on intentional breathing patterns to enhance physical, mental, and emotional well-being.

Here are some other methods and their associated benefits:

1. Pranayama

Originating from yoga practices from many moons ago, Pranayama involves controlled breathing exercises designed to regulate the flow of life energy. [Scientific studies have highlighted several benefits of Pranayama:](#)

- Stress Reduction: Pranayama activates the parasympathetic nervous system, promoting relaxation and reducing stress levels.
- Improved Sleep Quality: Regular practice has been linked to better sleep patterns and enhanced sleep quality.
- Enhanced Lung Function: Pranayama can improve respiratory efficiency and strengthen lung capacity.

2. Box Breathing

Also known as square breathing, Box Breathing is a simple technique that involves inhaling, holding the breath, exhaling, and holding again, each for an equal count (four seconds for example). This method offers several advantages and is [backed by scientific research](#):

- Enhanced Mental Clarity: By focusing on the breath, you can clear mental fog and improve concentration.
- Stress Reduction: The rhythmic pattern promotes relaxation and can alleviate symptoms of anxiety. If my mind is racing or my breathing is shallow, I can get a hold of the situation through box breathing.
- Helps You to Fall Asleep: Forget counting sheep! Count your inhalations, holds, exhalations, holds, and see how quickly you drift into lala land.



3. Alternate Nostril Breathing (Nadi Shodhana)

This yogic practice involves breathing through one nostril at a time, alternating between the left and right. It has been associated with several benefits:

- Improved Respiratory Function: Enhances lung capacity and efficiency.
- Reduced Stress and Anxiety: Promotes a sense of calm and balance.

You can [watch this video of Yoga with Adriene](#) for a 10 minutes guided practice of this slightly unique and very effective breathing exercise.

4. Holotropic Breathwork

Developed by psychiatrists Stanislav and Christina Grof in the 1970s, [Holotropic Breathwork](#) involves accelerated breathing techniques combined with evocative music to induce altered states of consciousness. You may feel:

- Emotional Release: Facilitates the processing and release of suppressed emotions.
- Enhanced Self-Awareness: Provides insights into personal issues and promotes self-discovery.

Due to its intensity, [Holotropic Breathwork carries risks](#) you should be aware of. It should be practiced under the guidance of trained professionals and should not be attempted without getting the go-ahead from your medical provider first.

Incorporating these breathwork techniques into one's routine can lead to significant improvements in mental clarity, emotional balance, and overall health. It's advisable to consult with trained practitioners before beginning practices like Holotropic or Rebirthing Breathwork to ensure safety and effectiveness.

4. Diet 🍎 and Movement 🏃

Let's get our bodies back in line with our natural rhythms.

We Are (Feeling) What We Eat

Nutrition can have a big change on our mental well-being. Ever heard "a calorie is a calorie is a calorie"? Well, maybe not. Foods like [kale, walnuts, and lentil beans have an anti-inflammatory effect](#) on our bodies.

Eating these and many other types of foods as opposed to processed and ultra processed foods can help pump the brakes on chronic inflammation which can damage the body. When I consistently eat these rich whole foods, the brain fog rolls in a lot less often than when I consistently eat stuff like crackers, microwavable meals, or pizza.

Movement as Medicine

A body in motion stays in motion. If you have been sedentary for an hour, a day, a month, or for a long time, now is as good a time as any to start moving. Of course,

always check with your doctor and healthcare providers to get the green light for any particular exercise plan.

The following activities kill two birds with one stone by being beneficial for both body and emotional regulation:

- Yoga
- Dance
- Walking (a personal favorite of mine)
- HIIT Training
- Pickleball
- Team sports like pickup basketball



5. Sleep Hygiene 🛌 For a Full Reset 🧑

Setting yourself up for good sleep is critical for overall regulation. Getting good sleep could mean the difference between feeling groggy and feeling like you can live to fight another day (or even feeling good enough to go out and live your best life!).

Solid, restorative sleep might be the difference between wanting to get revenge on the driver that cut you off and giving people the benefit of the doubt since we are all in this together.

Being in sync with our natural circadian rhythms can boost our mental clarity and make life less daunting.

For most adults, experts recommend 7-9 hours and [4-6 full sleep cycles](#) of both REM (rapid eye movement) and Non-REM every night. Being sleep-deprived can [lead to major health problems](#) like high blood pressure, heart problems, depression, and weight gain.

Let's lift the fog and try to enjoy our days by getting things right at night. Here are some behaviors you should consider if you want to have some sweet dreams.

Maintain a Consistent Sleep Schedule: Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day, even on weekends, to regulate your body's internal clock.

Create a Relaxing Pre-Bedtime Routine: Engage in calming activities, such as reading fiction or doing 5, 10, or 20 minutes of meditation, before bed to signal your body that it's time to wind down.

Optimize Your Sleep Environment: Ensure your bedroom is quiet, dark, and cool. Consider using blackout curtains or Persian blinds (like the ones they use in Europe), earplugs and eye masks, floor fans, or white noise machines. You can find dozens of white noise or sleep-inducing playlists on Spotify. The app Insight Timer is a personal favorite that has a ton of guided body scans, meditations, and even recorded nighttime sounds from the desert.



Limit Exposure to Screens Before Bed: Avoid electronic devices an hour before bedtime, as the [blue light emitted can interfere](#) with melatonin production and disrupt sleep. I don't know about you, but news, doomscrolling, and notifications overstimulate my mind. Right before bed might be the worst time to engage in the online world since I'm trying to calm my mind.

Be Mindful of Evening Dietary Choices: Avoid consuming caffeine 10-12 hours before bed as it can interfere with that restorative sleep we need. The perk-me-up juice can be pumping through our system for ten hours or more depending on our genetics and other factors. The [half-life of caffeine is 5-6 hours](#). So if I have two cupsa joe (about 200 mg of caffeine) at 11:00 a.m., 12 hours later when I go to bed I will still have 25 mg of caffeine in my system.

Caffeine Half-Life Calculator

Initial Dose (mg):
200

Time Passed (hours):
12

Calculate

After 12 hours, the remaining caffeine from an initial dose of 200 mg is:
25.00 mg

Avoid heavy meals, overeating, and alcohol 3 hours before bedtime to prevent sleep disruptions. According to [University of Michigan behavioral sleep expert Dr. Deirdre Conroy](#), a three-hour guideline for alcohol before bed is recommended because while it has a sedative effect at first, it impedes our ability to stay asleep and achieve those 4-6 full sleep cycles.

Incorporate Regular Physical Activity: Engage in at least [30 minutes of daily exercise](#) to help you fall asleep faster and enjoy deeper sleep. Try to avoid strenuous exercise close

to bedtime as the endorphins are riding high throughout the body, so it might be tough to quiet the brain when your head hits the pillow.

Compartmentalize Your Spaces: For myself, keeping activities like eating, working, or watching TV out of the bedroom helps me to more quickly get to sleeping. Maintaining your bedroom as a sleep space can strengthen the mental association between your throne and pure, unadulterated ZZZ's.

6. Reconnecting With Meaning and Creativity 🎨

There is power in solitude and self-reflection. While not looking at a screen can cause a little bit of anxiety at first, disconnecting and having some me-time to really check in with yourself can be extremely powerful. Journaling in the morning, even for 1, 5, or 10 minutes, starts the day off in creative mode instead of immediately going into reactive mode.

In fact, I highly recommend limiting phone use and screen time in the morning. Do not check email early in the morning. Do not respond to every notification. I'm not perfect at this, but I do try to limit my reactive self as best I can. Putting the phone off to the side and journaling with the first cuppa joe or tea allows feelings, emotions, and even some subconscious thoughts to come out and onto the paper.

The inspiration for this is of course [Julia Cameron's](#) "Morning Pages" which asks us to write 3 pages of stream of consciousness every morning. Anecdotal, it has some crazy positive results. I know I feel more creative and open to life that day. In business and work, my mind just seems to come up with interesting solutions and proposals.

Again, I try my best to write at least a little every morning, even if it is my 5 Appreciations from that day or the day before. I feel less moody and offended when I do my list of things I'm grateful for.

My brother finds that stating, thinking about, or writing down his gratitude list helps give him a little bit more love and mental space throughout the day. Try out Morning Pages or a list of your 5 Appreciations (Gratitudes) and see how it can pull you out of that cloud.

I won't go too deep into it, but Julia Cameron also suggests "The Artist's Date" which is a one-time a week solo date to go out on an adventure and do something you enjoy. It does not have to be artsy, but one artist date that I love is going to a museum for no

more than an hour and putting in my headphones while blasting music. Classical tends to get my mind in an expansive, thought-provoking state.

Creative endeavors are fun and can be extremely therapeutic. You can reignite your inner purpose and wake up some part of you when you make anything. I love music, and when I sit to play guitar and take a lesson through YouTube I feel relaxed and accomplished afterward. I recently have been drawing through YouTube tutorials also.



I spent \$5 to get a sketchbook and graphite pencils (HB 2mm). Because I have little practice, I google “how to draw __ (fill in the blank) __” and put the speed at 0.5x 😊

Last week I drew an apple. I felt like my focus was zoned in on the task at hand and other random to-do's and stresses just were not there. It was apple drawing time. I share the drawings with my brother and nephew in a group chat. We have a no-judgement, 100% encouragement zone for sharing drawings, 3D printed creations, and music performances.

Try an art: music, poetry, ceramics, painting, etc. that you used to do, want to do more of, or want to try out. Give yourself permission to not be good. If you are a natural talent, good for you! The point is to make something using your mind and body.

Notice how you feel during and after making art. I hope it helps you get out of a funk. I hope it gives you some breathing room between yourself and the chaos and unpredictability of life.

7. Practical Daily Rituals 🙏 for Sustainable Self-Renewal ☀️

My recommendation is to set up a realistic, adaptable daily and weekly ritual that works for you. Set up your daily ritual with something small (5-10 minutes, which you can always add more to later). If you want you can start with pre-breakfast and pre-sleep rituals and add in an afternoon movement or away-from-the-desk routine after nailing down your mornings and evenings.

Take into consideration your personal realities. If you have a family, kids, school, etc. think about ways to carve out 5-10 minutes for yourself. Think about your work commitments and spaces where you can steal away a little me-time.

If you want to add in 5-10 minutes of one routine in the morning and one routine at night, that's a great start. Add in more time or more routines after you solidify your initial new habits. Or if you like to go for drastic changes, make the decision to wake up and go to bed much earlier, adding in several new routines at once. Make a commitment to yourself to implement your changes for one week, then two, then one month. You can do anything for a week, or a month.

Have you ever heard that it takes 21 days to form a habit? Me too. But it seems to be a myth. [The science shows](#) that it takes more like 60 days. Morning routines are easier to stick to than nightly ones. You can stay more consistent if the habit is simple, has an immediate reward, and a clear trigger. For example, once I have my first sip of coffee in the morning I step onto the yoga mat to move for about 10 minutes.

This has become automatic and I've stuck to it (*almost*) daily because:

1. It's simple: move for 10 minutes, no matter what I do as long as I'm moving my body, stretching, doing yoga, pilates, tai chi, etc.
2. I have an immediate reward: my coffee next to me that I take sips of throughout my movement. I also feel more awake and hopeful because of the movement and the coffee. Another reward is instrumental music that I enjoy. And finally the quiet around me and knowing that everyone else is asleep allows my system to relax and enjoy the moment even more.
3. Clear trigger: The first sip of coffee means moving to my movement area and a yoga mat.

Above all else, know thyself! Once I made a goal of getting up at 5:00am. Anyway, the neighbor above me got up every morning at 4:20am, making plenty of noise and going out for a run. I hated this for me. But I figured I might as well use the early wake-up call to my advantage and give myself more time for morning rituals.

I tried to wake up at 5:00am or earlier, a cold and dark week in January of 2024. This was exciting for me, but it only lasted three days. I was useless at work. I had no

energy after 12 because I was running on caffeine. My body couldn't actually fall asleep until midnight anyway.

Perhaps if I had pushed through the tough days I could have made this new schedule work. It just wasn't worth it to me though. I ended up getting up slightly earlier than normal, around 6:30 or 6:45 in the morning, which was just enough to add in some short morning routines that set my day off right.

Set up a checklist like the one below. Adjust, add, and delete as you see fit. It is important to add at least 1 morning and 1 evening routine to start off.

***OPTIONS* For Daily Rituals to Feeling More Grounded and Less Foggy**

Morning Routine:

- Get up slightly earlier (15 or 30 minutes; if you want to go for the “pull off the bandaid” approach go for 1 hour earlier, or work up towards it)
- Journal / Gratitude List / Morning Pages for 5 to 10 minutes (again work up to 20 min. or more if you want)
- Morning Movement: Set a timer for 5-10 minutes (more if you want) to stretch or do a bit of yoga sun salutations. I usually play instrumental music to let my mind wander and ease into the day.
- A Hearty or Healthy Breakfast (for me it's usually a few scrambled eggs, spinach, and avocado)
- Something Else You Feel Would Help You Start the Day Off Right

Afternoon Routine:

- Physically separate yourself from your work environment in the middle of the day if you can. Go for a walk alone or with a work bestie during lunch break.
- Eat your lunch solo or with a coworker at a picnic bench away from where you work.
- Do not eat at your desk. The idea is to give yourself some space from the to-do's.
- Do not look at your email during your break.
- Something Else to Help You Reset and Rest in the Afternoon

Evening Routine:

- Switch from screens (TV, iPad, laptop, phone) to real paper books 1 hour before you hit the hay.
- Make yourself an herbal tea an hour before bed. Personally, I go for [Sleepy Time Tea](#) with a little honey and a dash of lemon



- Put on some relaxing music 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Meditate, pray, sit in silence. You can set a timer for 5, 10, or 15 minutes. Have a dedicated relax space so your body gets the cue that it is quiet time.
- Brush your teeth and floss (don't be gross :) Something this simple can trigger your brain to go into sleepy mode.
- Mood setting: make your room as dark as possible. Put your phone on the other side of the room or charge it in the kitchen. Use a good ole' clock radio for your alarm. Have a good fiction book next to you on the bed stand. Read with low room lighting and a book light.
- 5-10 minutes before falling asleep. While in bed, go through your day in your mind and think about moments where you felt alive, kind, and loved by others. If there were icky parts of the day or you just had a crappy day, feel the feelings. Don't suppress your emotions. Recognize that tomorrow is a chance for something different. Visualize yourself in the morning waking up refreshed, ready to take on the world, and giving yourself and others the best version of yourself.

8. Conclusion 🎉

Take back your balance and recalibrate your mind, body, and spirit. The world is going to keep turning, and we are going to have control over very little of it. Some people are going to continue to annoy us, and world news is going to continue to report on some terrible realities.

However, we can control how we show up each day for ourselves and, in turn, for our communities. Recognizing if we feel clear-minded, but physically tired, foggy-brained, exhausted, or just neutral is the first step. From there we can implement appropriate changes and see what works, and what doesn't, and try something else.

We are not going for perfect bodies, or total enlightenment (which is impossible to achieve anyway when you make it something to achieve). Instead, we are looking to feel a little bit better incrementally. Again, if you are one of the few who can implement radical changes and stick with them, be my guest! But for most of us, we want to be able to sustain new habits that will change our lives for the better over the long run.

Implementing any and all of the strategies outlined in this article can help you to feel more equilibrium. Being more balanced helps the cloudiness to dissipate and can lead to more fulfilling lives.

Implementing one change at a time, and sticking with it can help us feel in control. Pay attention to how you feel after putting the changes into practice. The feelings may be subtle. The change may bring about incredibly drastic improvements in the way you feel.

What habits, routines, and practices have helped you in the past to rebalance? What changes are you going to start making today?

Post your comments below.

Before you go, we want to share our latest good ideas with you. Every Friday we send our members 1 practical and thought-provoking email called the Friday Check-In. Want us to stay in touch with you? [Click here to receive the Friday Check-In](#) and we'll also send you our ebook "Seize Your Day" for free!—we promise not to spam your inbox!