

Self-care

We are like teapots. We are pouring cups of tea out of our pot all day every time we help our family or friends.

We are not magic teapots. We do not stay full all the time. We get empty! We need to fill our pots back up again so we can feel good and so we can care for others.

If we look after ourselves, we can keep our teapots full.

Think: What empties your pot?

Your pot might be empty because you don't get enough sleep, your child is unwell, you miss your family. It might be empty because of everything you need to do every day like shopping, cooking, and getting your kids ready for school. You might be worried about money and the bills you must pay.

Think: How does it feel when your pot is empty?

When your teapot is empty, you might feel like a volcano.

You might yell, throw things, find it hard to sit still. You might be sweaty with a fast heart and feel out of control. If you ever feel like a volcano, learn what this feels like. If you can see when the volcano feeling is coming, you can try to fill up your teapot with good things.

If you feel like a volcano, sit quietly with your hands on your stomach. Relax your eyes – they can be open or shut. Breathe in slowly while you count to 4 in your mind. Count – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4. Breath out slowly while you count to 5 in your mind. Count – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5. Do this 4 times. Do it more if you need to. The longer out-breath tells your body that you are safe. It helps to calm you down if you feel like a volcano.

When your teapot is empty, you might feel lonely.

Maybe you cry a lot, sleep a lot, stay home, avoid things. You might feel empty and sad and out of control. If you ever feel lonely, learn what this feels like. If you can see when the lonely feelings are coming, you can try to fill your teapot with good things.

If you feel lonely, stand up, breathe in, and force the air out through your nose. Make it a forceful, long, and loud out-breath. Feel your power and your energy. Do this 4 times. How do you feel now?

Think: What does it feel like when your pot is full?

When your teapot is full, you might feel like a tree in a forest. You feel strong. You can smile and laugh. You have energy, you can go out and do things. You can solve problems. It feels good. Pay attention to what helps you feel like this.



Think: What fills your pot?

Here are some ideas:

- Make a pot of tea and sit outside, take your time to drink the tea. How good does the tea taste?
- Give yourself a hand massage – rub hand cream into your palms. Press your thumb into your palm, rub each finger, rub the back of the hand and the wrist. What parts of your hands are sore? How do your hands feel after the massage?
- Go for a walk – look at the trees and the sky. Feel the air on your skin. Feel warm in the sunshine.
- Eat good food like fresh fruit and vegetables.
- Sit quietly and do a breathing exercise.
- Listen to music. Dance.
- Meet a friend and go shopping, cook or eat a meal together.

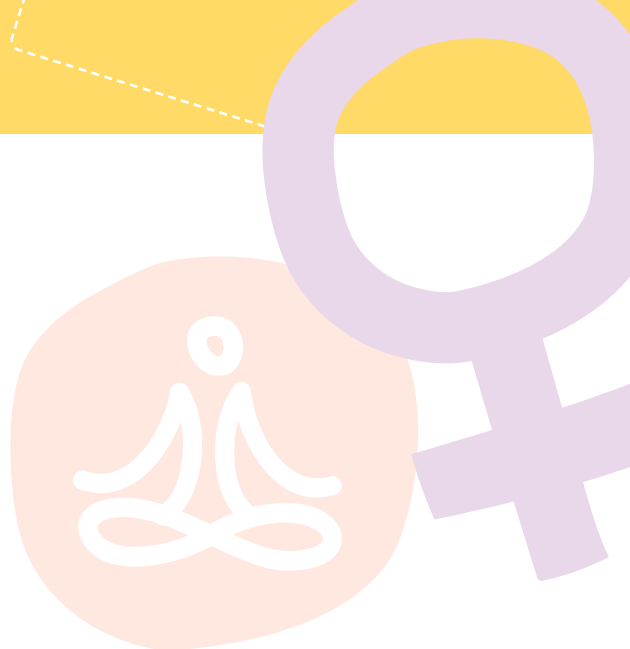
Work out what helps you. And do these things regularly to help you feel like a tree in the forest. This will help you to cope better the next time that stress, illness, or tough times come along.

Breathing helps

We breathe all the time. In and out, over, and over. Most of the time we don't notice our breathing. But sometimes we have a shallow breath, and we can feel our heart racing and our stomach is tight. Our breathing is affected by how we feel, and we can change how we feel by changing our breathing.

Knowing how to slow down your breath can help you feel calm. It is something you can do anywhere and anytime to help yourself so that when things are getting difficult you don't feel like a volcano. Changing your breathing can also lift your mood if you are feeling lonely.

Here are some methods you can try. You might find one of them helpful.



1. The Hand

Hold your left hand up and trace up and down your fingers very slowly with your right index finger. As you go up one finger breathe in, as you go down a finger breathe out. Keep going slowly until you finish the left hand. Then swap hands.

How do you feel now?

2. Box breathing

Think of the four sides of a square – or a box. Inhale to a count of 4. Count – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4. Hold for a count of 4. Count – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4. Exhale for a count of 4. Count – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4. Hold for a count of 4. Count – 1 – 2 – 3 – 4. Repeat this 6 times.

How do you feel now?

If you are feeling very stressed, exhale for a count of 6 instead of 4.

3. Observing your natural breath

Sit somewhere quiet. Relax your eyes – they can be open or closed. Pay attention to the air coming in your nose, your chest rising, your stomach rising. Just observe, don't change how you breathe. Then focus on the air coming out of your nose and your chest and stomach falling. Just observe, don't change how you breathe. Allow any thoughts, emotions, and sensations to come and go but return to observing your breathing. Repeat for as long as you wish.

Do you feel calmer now?

4. Belly breathing

Lie down and bend your knees so they point upwards, with your feet flat on the floor. Breathe naturally for a minute or two. Then place both hands on top of each other on your stomach and continue breathing naturally. Continue for as long as you like. Feel your stomach rising and falling, rising, and falling. That is all you need to think about and feel right now.

5. Guided breathing

Listen to our 5-minute guided breathing exercise – go to [English Resources](#). It asks you to observe your breath, and to make your out-breath longer than your in-breath. The longer out-breath tells your body that you are safe. It helps you calm down if you feel like a volcano.

www.womenshealthtas.org.au/resources/english-resources

Go to [Meditation with Valerie](#) for breathing exercises and meditations of various lengths, from 5 minutes to 30 minutes. From practicing self-compassion, to contemplating nature or taking in the good, Valerie will help you fill your teapot.

www.womenshealthtas.org.au/podcasts/meditation-valerie

The Australian Smiling Mind APP has many guided breathing exercises. It has special content for children, to help with sleep, being calm at work and in relationships, and for managing stress. Download it for free from [Smiling Mind](#). www.smilingmind.com.au

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