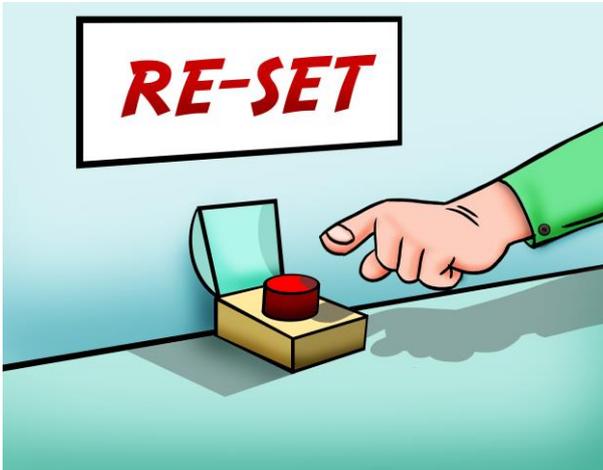


## FAST Pathways – Building the Skills for Stress Success

The Quick Re-Set is the first of the skills we explore in the FAST Pathways programme.



Like a system soft-reboot, it's a quick and effective way to get back to emotional neutral, to be able to respond calmly to whatever's going on.

It takes only a couple of minutes, and I recommend you to do it at least three times a day – unlike many of the things which are really good for you, it's easy and enjoyable; so no matter how busy you are, you should be able to clear few minutes somewhere each day.

If you ever have trouble sleeping, doing it for about 10 minutes just before you go to bed can really help.

### How It Works

The Re-Set has two main components: Firstly, by slowing your breathing, you take in extra oxygen. This helps your body re-set back to your optimum chemistry, neutralising excess adrenaline. Breathing is a very present activity – you never reminisce about breaths of the past, or store up a few extra for the future, just in case. Slowing it down, and noticing how it feels to breathe all the way to the bottom of your lungs, helps to gently bring your thoughts into now. Focusing on the feeling and the gentle rhythm, and for a few minutes, letting go.

In this respect it's similar to meditation, but with an important difference: When you meditate, you're meant to have a quiet mind (there's a lot more to it, but that's one important part) – which, unless you put in a lot of practice, can be very difficult.

This isn't about not having thoughts, but about letting the ones you have drift through; rather than linking in a chain of one to another and the next. So that you can notice whatever thoughts are there, and just for those few minutes, let them pass through, without giving them any extra energy.

As well as being easier, this has the advantage that often, the thoughts as you relax can be really useful: That name you were racking your brains for a few hours ago, comes easily into your awareness – it was there all along, but with everything else going on in your mind, it couldn't get through....

Or you get a really creative insight into something you've been mulling over – one of those 'D'Oh!' moments, where it's suddenly blindingly obvious. You're giving your outside-awareness thinking a little extra space, accessing resources that you may not otherwise use.

The second ingredient was discovered when scientists were experimenting with reading brain waves: Look straight ahead, then keeping your head still, look up to the ceiling (so that only your eyes move). They found that this movement of your eyes in the sockets changes your brainwaves – from the type you make in conscious activity, to those of a light sleep. Combine this with the shift in body chemistry from slowing your breathing, and a bit of imagination, and you can quickly get back to comfortable.



## Uses of the Quick Re-Set

- You've just had a difficult conversation, which didn't go your way. Rather than stewing over it, you want to switch off replaying it in your thoughts, and get on with your day
- You're experiencing a craving, whether it's for food, cigarettes, or anything else which isn't good for you. Rather than having a prolonged battle with yourself, you want to simply switch it off
- You're getting ready for a test or exam, and you want to remain relaxed and calm while you study or practise – so that instead of thinking what it's leading towards, you're fully focused on the task in hand
- You've been engrossed in doing something. Now it's time to stop and move on to something else, so you want to clear your mind ready for what's next
- You're about to give a speech or presentation, and you want to stand up feeling relaxed and comfortable
- Something's going on in your life which upsets or frustrates you, or makes you angry. You know that responding from a place of raw emotion isn't going to do you any favours; so you want to get those emotions out of the way, to properly express yourself
- You've plucked up the courage to do something which you used to worry about or avoid, and you want to feel confident in your ability to do it with ease
- You're having an important conversation, and you want to focus fully on what the other person's saying, rather than on what's going on inside your head
- You've had a hectic day at work: As you leave to go home, you want to switch off any more work-related thoughts, so that you can immerse just as fully in your time away from it

## Little and Often

Most of the FAST Pathways skills work inside your not-on-purpose thinking, without you having to keep on doing anything differently. This one's slightly different, in delivering its biggest benefits when you do it little and often. Whether you listen to the audio, or just take a couple of minutes to breathe more deliberately. And there are two reasons for this.

Firstly, it helps to bring your system out of high-alert, making it so much easier to maintain you over all stress levels within the useful zone. And secondly, the more you practise, the easier it becomes. There may be times when you want to get back to that emotional neutral really quickly – perhaps someone's said something which touched a nerve, and rather than getting hooked into an argument, you want to respond calmly. You can't put them on hold for two minutes while you breathe (wouldn't it be lovely if life had that pause button?!). But when you practice little and often, you can get back to your neutral in a single breath.