



How to H.A.L.T Stress

fast

A SIMPLE SELF-CARE PRACTICE TO REGAIN COMPOSURE
WHEN OVERWHELMING EMOTIONS STRIKE

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Why H.A.L.T?

We often have a hard time acknowledging our limits. Instead, we power on, stay busy, and deny our need for recovery. That's because decision fatigue essentially switches off our ability to self-monitor. We fail to recognize the symptoms that are telling us we need a break.

A simple self-care practice known as HALT can help you take back control when you feel yourself getting flustered, anxious, stressed, or upset. HALT stands for hungry, angry, lonely, or tired. It is a self-care tool that helps you check in on your emotional and physical state.

When you tune into your thoughts and feelings, you can catch stress and anxiety before they get the better of you.

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*Within you, there is a stillness and a sanctuary
to which you can retreat at any time
and be yourself.*

HERMANN HESSE



How To H.A.L.T. Your Stress Response

I recommend using the HALT framework to do a personal self-inventory, so that you can recognize when you're most vulnerable to making poor decisions or unnecessarily overreacting. This means regularly taking time during your day to ask yourself if you are:

- *Hungry*
- *Angry*
- *Lonely*
- *Tired*

The framework includes the basic needs that are hardwired into our biology. If you're dealing with any of these problems, you're more likely to respond negatively to stressors and make bad decisions.

This tool can help you better care for yourself and stay in control of your reactions—personally and professionally.





How To H.A.L.T. Your Stress Response (cont.)

IF YOU'RE HUNGRY

Low blood sugar can mimic anxiety and panic symptoms, studies show, so practice “hanger” management. Avoid skipping meals or going too long without eating. If you do find that you’re hungry, pause before you accidentally fire off a defensive email to your boss and find yourself a snack.

IF YOU'RE ANGRY

While anger is uncomfortable, it’s a normal human emotion and important to deal with constructively. Research suggests that venting does more harm than good, so think twice before lashing out on Twitter or passive-aggressively slamming doors to let your partner know you’re mad. However, bottling up your frustrations or ignoring them doesn’t work either. Instead, try journaling, progressive relaxation, or mindfulness exercises to get your prefrontal cortex back in the driver’s seat.



How To H.A.L.T. Your Stress Response (cont.)

IF YOU'RE LONELY

Feeling rejected, misunderstood, or alone can lead to internalizing behaviors such as self-imposed isolation and withdrawal. Humans need interaction to survive, so it's important to tend to your social needs, even if you're shy or introverted. If you find yourself on the verge of making an emotional or impulsive decision, it may be that loneliness—rather than logic—is driving your thinking. Pick up the phone to call a friend, force yourself to go to book club, or ask a co-worker out to coffee before returning to the matter at hand. You'll be a lot more likely to make a sound choice if your emotional reserves are full.

IF YOU'RE TIRED

It's common to tout "being busy" as a badge of honor, but living in a state of perpetual exhaustion is not sustainable. Build time into your schedule for adequate rest and recovery, and be diligent about practicing sleep hygiene. If technology is negatively effecting your well-being, consider a digital detox.



The H.A.L.T Self-Care Practice

Print out this reference sheet and keep it close by. It walks you through the practice and provides you with quick questions to ask yourself so you can get back to equilibrium.

H ungry	Am I hungry?	When our blood sugar is low, it mimics anxiety. Our body sends urgent signals to find food NOW!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When did I last eat? • Is my hunger emotional or about food? • What is my body asking for?
A ngry	Am I angry?	Stress and frustration triggers our fight response. We seek an outlet for release.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What am I dealing with right now that is stressful? • How can I diffuse this stress?
L onely	Am I lonely?	Loneliness also activates the brain's danger signal. We look for substitutes to fill the gap.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When was the last time I connected with someone? • How can I get more positive experiences with others? • Who in my support system can I reach out to? • How can I connect in the here and now to feel supported?
T ired	Am I tired?	When we are physically exhausted the body and mind don't function optimally. This especially goes for areas related to concentration and decision making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do I need a break? • How can I energize myself?





Making H.A.L.T. a Habit

One problem with HALT is that you need to use it the most when you're not in a frame of mind to do so. That's why I've systematized it into my routines and daily practices, which I've come to refer to as my personal scheduled maintenance. This includes:

- Leaving a 15-minute buffer in between all appointments in order to give me wiggle room to HALT, decompress, and replenish if needed.
- Eating the same thing every day to limit decision fatigue. Call me boring, but it helps me direct more energy towards creative projects.
- To stave off the loneliness of working alone, I make sure to end days with an activity that will place me around other people—whether that's a networking event, yoga class, or simply spending a few hours writing in a café.

Decision fatigue, halted.

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Calmness is the cradle of power.

JOSIAH GILBERT HOLLAND



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This guide was born out of a need I heard from the thousands of smart, sensitive overachievers in my audience and from hundreds of my coaching clients.

I believe the material in this guide will help you become more confident and in control of your professional life. But to get the life-changing stuff, you've got to join us in The Haven, a private community for Sensitive Strivers just like you.

You've already taken the first step, so why not join a community of ambitious, likeminded Sensitive Strivers who can also help you reach your potential?

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