

# HOW TO KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

by Margaret Moore

## Frontal Lobes

One of my scientific heroes, positive-psychology researcher Barbara Fredrickson, published a study a few years ago showing that the largest variable in determining our level of life satisfaction

is resilience — the ability to bounce back quickly from life's small and large upsets. It wasn't having a great boss or a happy family or regular vacations, but the capacity to get our emotional balance back when we are blown off balance by negative emotions.

Easier said than done, you say — "I just can't seem to pull myself out of my frenzy, let alone quickly calm down." Not surprising in today's world. The way we live overloads and exhausts the brain's CEO region, the prefrontal cortex, which is the part that can calmly notice, assess and manage our emotions, and enables us to carry on.

So, what can you do to give your prefrontal cortex a boost and some additional support? Here are the top three ways I right my emotional ship when I hit stormy weather, and I recommend you try them.

### 1. TAKE CARE OF YOUR BODY TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR BRAIN.

You may be tired of hearing about this research, but the best way to boost your brain's CEO power is to exercise at least a little every few hours. Not just a few good workouts every week, but two or three minutes of stair climbing, brisk walking, stretching or yoga poses every hour or two allows you to shift the spotlight of your attention to your heart and limbs for a quick brain break and recharge.

A longer brain recharge comes from a good night's sleep, so maybe this is the time to work on improving your sleep habits. And, given that the brain has no energy stores, its gas tank contains whatever you put into your bloodstream. A good balance and regular dose of healthy fats, complex carbs and lean protein gives the brain steady energy, which will help you navigate stormy emotional weather.

### 2. HIT THE BRAIN'S PAUSE & RESET BUTTON.

Maybe you haven't discovered your brain's Pause & Reset button, but it's in the middle of your forehead. Just press on your forehead with your forefinger and say "Pause" out loud. Keep your finger there while you take a few breaths, and then your brain will reset. You don't think I'm serious? If your smart phone can do it, so can you.

### 3. GIVE YOUR NEGATIVE EMOTIONS A WARM HUG.

Just like babies cry when their needs aren't being met, our negative emotions are simply crying out to have their needs met. One primary need is for a little love. Rather than resisting or avoiding our own suffering, the new science of self-compassion shows us that leaning in to fully experience emotions, such as worry, sadness or anger, and feeling compassion for ourselves, is far more effective. Cross your hands over your heart, and appreciate that you are suffering. Like a crying baby, your frenzy will settle just a little so you can keep on going. **B**

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