

# Gut-Brain Axis Stress Management Toolkit

*Practical strategies to break the cycle of stress and bloating*

Your Fit Nature

Welcome to Your Toolkit

## **You Can't Out-Diet Stress.**

This toolkit is designed to complement your dietary efforts. By managing the "Brain" side of the Gut-Brain Axis, you can reduce visceral hypersensitivity, improve motility, and finally find relief from stubborn bloating.

## 1. Vagus Nerve Activation: The "Reset" Button

The vagus nerve is the highway between your brain and gut. Stimulating it tells your body to switch from "Fight or Flight" to "Rest and Digest."

### Technique A: Diaphragmatic Breathing (4-4-6)

Use this before meals or during stressful moments.

1. **Inhale** slowly through your nose for **4 seconds**. Feel your belly expand (not your chest).
2. **Hold** the breath for **4 seconds**.
3. **Exhale** slowly through your mouth for **6 seconds**. Make a soft "whoosh" sound.
4. Repeat for **5 minutes**.

### Technique B: The Physiological Sigh

Best for acute panic or sudden anxiety spikes.

- Take a double inhale through the nose (one long, one short to top it off).
- Exhale very slowly through the mouth.
- Repeat 3 times.

## 2. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) Reframing

Anxiety about bloating often makes bloating worse. Use this table to reframe catastrophic thoughts.

The Stress Thought (Trigger)	The Reframed Thought (Coping)
"My stomach is huge. Everyone is staring at me."	"I feel bloated, but it's likely not as visible to others as it feels to me. I am safe."
"This pain will never go away. My day is ruined."	"This is a wave of discomfort. It is temporary. I have tools to manage it."
"I can't eat anything without getting sick."	"Some foods trigger me, but many are safe. I am learning what works for my body."

### 3. Sleep Hygiene Protocol

Poor sleep increases cortisol, which inflames the gut.

- ☐ **The Caffeine Cutoff:** No caffeine after 2:00 PM.
- ☐ **The Digital Sunset:** Blue light filters on or screens off 60 minutes before bed.
- ☐ **The Environment:** Bedroom temperature between 18-20°C (65-68°F). Pitch black darkness.
- ☐ **The Wind-Down:** 5 minutes of gentle stretching or reading (paper book) before sleep.

## 4. Daily Food & Mood Tracker

Tracking the *context* of your symptoms is just as important as tracking the food.

Date: _____	
Morning Stress Level (1-10): _____	Sleep Quality: Poor / Fair / Good
Meal 1: _____	
Context (Rushed? Anxious? Relaxed?): _____	
Symptoms (1-2 hrs later): _____	
Meal 2: _____	
Context (Rushed? Anxious? Relaxed?): _____	
Symptoms (1-2 hrs later): _____	
Meal 3: _____	
Context (Rushed? Anxious? Relaxed?): _____	
Symptoms (1-2 hrs later): _____	
End of Day Reflection:	
Did I practice a breathing exercise today? Yes / No	
Notes:	

*This toolkit is for educational purposes and does not replace medical advice.*