

IAMPILO



Practical Techniques:  
Core uKukhula Tools  
to Manage Stress

# Understanding Stress in Your Work

## Thandi's Story Continues

Remember Thandi, our caregiver from the mining community in Limpopo? After learning to notice and name her stress, she felt a little lighter – like putting down a heavy bucket for a moment. But she still needed tools to stay strong every day.

One evening, sitting under the stars with her elder auntie, Thandi shared her worries. The auntie smiled and said, "My child, just as we breathe to live, we can use our breath to calm the storm inside. And like reshaping a bent walking stick to make it straight again, we can reshape our thoughts. We can also tie good feelings to a simple touch, the way we tie a knot in a string to remember something important."

Thandi started practising these simple uKukhula Coaching tools. Soon, even on long dusty walks or after sad cases with abandoned babies, she felt calmer. She could smile more for the children and help families better. These tools take just minutes but grow your strength like rain on dry land.

Here are the four core tools. Try each one as you read – pause and practise, just like Thandi did.



# Tools to Manage Stress

# Mindfulness Breathing (Box Breathing)

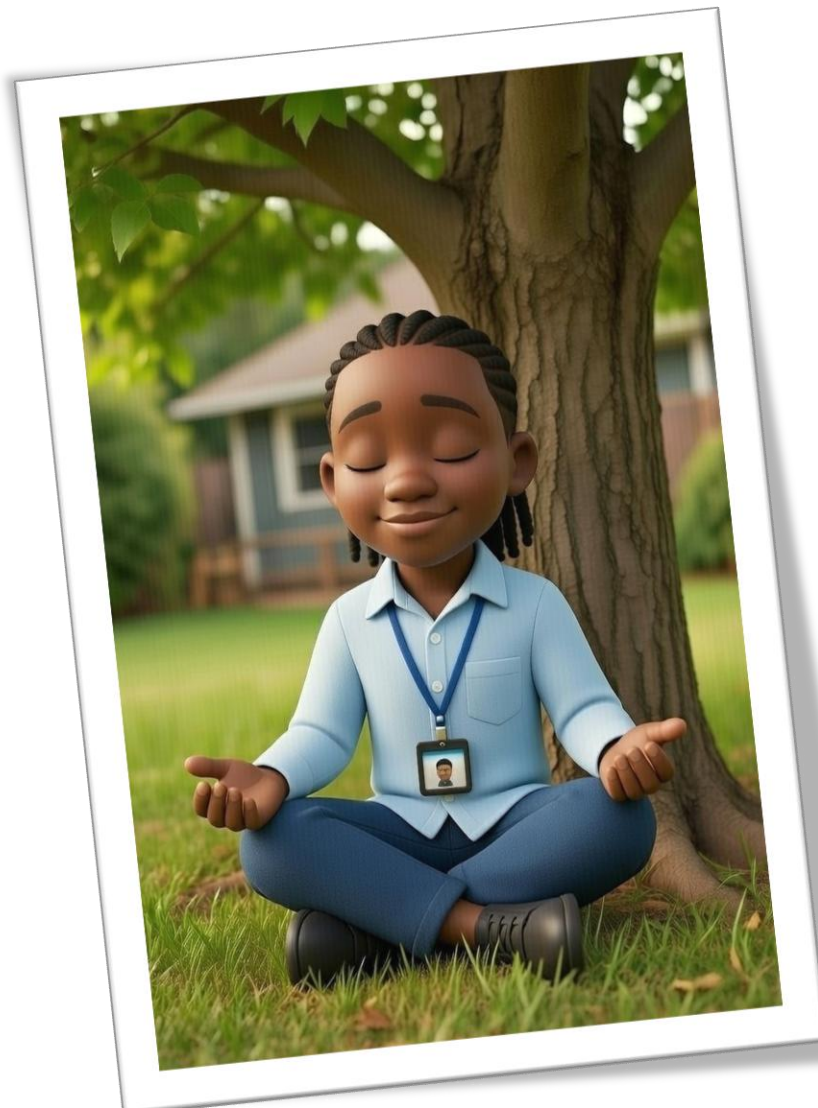
When isolation hits or your mind races like a startled springbok, use this simple breathing.

How to do it (take 1 minute now): Sit or stand comfortably. Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 counts (1-2-3-4). Hold the breath for 4 counts. Breathe out through your mouth for 4 counts. Hold empty for 4 counts. Repeat 4–6 times.

Thandi uses it before visiting a family in crisis. It calms her mind, like sitting quietly by a still river watching the water flow.

## Why it works:

This is mindfulness – being fully present with your breath. UNICEF and WHO recommend mindfulness practices for caregivers because they improve well-being and reduce stress. Studies show regular mindful breathing lowers anxiety and helps people handle tough emotions better, especially in high-pressure jobs like child protection



# Positive Anchoring

## (From Cognitive Behavioural Therapy - CBT)

Negative thoughts can grow big like weeds in a garden. CBT helps you pull them out and plant better ones.

### **How to do it (take 1 minute now):**

Notice a heavy thought, like "I can't handle this difficult case with the orphaned child's family." Pause. Ask: "Is this completely true?" Then change it to something helpful: "This case is hard, but I can take one small step today – maybe just listen well." Say the new thought out loud or in your head.

Thandi did this when fearing a mistake. She changed "I'll never get through all these visits" to "I've helped many families before – I can do one at a time, like eating an elephant bite by bite."

### **Why it works:**

CBT is a proven way to change unhelpful thinking patterns. Research from health organisations shows CBT reduces stress and burnout in caregivers and social workers. It helps you feel more in control, even in remote areas with heavy caseloads.



# Positive Anchoring

## (From Neuro-Linguistic Programming - NLP)

Anchor a strong feeling to a simple action, like tying a bright cloth around your wrist to remember good luck.

**How to do it (take 1 minute now):** Close your eyes. Remember a time you felt proud and strong – maybe when you helped reunite a child with a safe family, or when a little one smiled at you. Feel that warmth fully. At the strongest moment, gently press your thumb and forefinger together. Hold for a few seconds. Now, whenever you feel weak or alone, press those fingers again – the good feeling will return.

Thandi anchors the joy of seeing a once-abandoned baby laugh in a loving home. In tough moments, that touch brings back her strength.

**Why it works:** NLP anchoring links positive states to triggers. Studies on NLP techniques show they help people quickly access calm and confidence, reducing stress in coaching and therapy settings.



# Daily Self-Care Actions

Small daily actions keep you strong, like tending a small fire to cook many meals.

**How to do it (plan 1 minute now):** Choose easy actions: Take a short walk in the fresh air. Talk to a colleague or friend about your day. Set boundaries – end work at a certain time with a simple routine, like drinking tea and saying, "Today is done." Build your support circle through ubuntu – share and listen.

Thandi now walks home slowly, noticing the sunset, and chats with another caregiver weekly.

**Why it works:** Self-care prevents burnout. Research on child protection workers shows simple actions like exercise, talking, and boundaries improve mental health and help caregivers stay effective longer.





Practise these tools daily, sister or brother. Start small – even one tool makes a difference.

Like Thandi, you'll grow calmer and stronger, ready to nurture the vulnerable children in our communities.

uKukhula – we grow together.

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