THE SURGEON'S MICRO-RECOVERY TOOLKIT

12 QUICK TECHNIQUES TO SUPPORT PHYSICAL RESILIENCE, MENTAL CLARITY, AND SURGICAL PERFORMANCE

40–50% of surgeons experience burnout[1]

79–88% report work-related musculoskeletal pain[2]

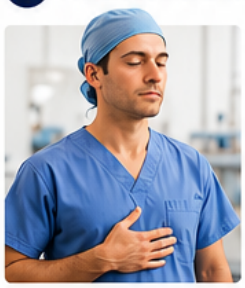
5 MINUTES of breathing exercises can reduce anxiety and improve mood[3]

Small moments. Big impact.
Micro-recovery practices—done in seconds or minutes—reduce stress, improve focus, and support your long-term health and surgical

1. Busireddy IKR et al. JAMA Surg. 2017;152(10):e173400. 2. Teo J et al. Am J Surg. 2020;219(5):900-906. 3. Stanford Medicine. 2023. Cyclic sighing study.

BEFORE SURGERY *Prime your body and mind.*

1 PHYSIOLOGICAL SIGH — 10–15 sec

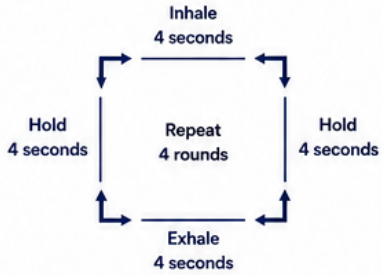


1. Inhale through the nose
2. Take a second, short inhale
3. Long, slow exhale through the mouth

Repeat 2–3 times.

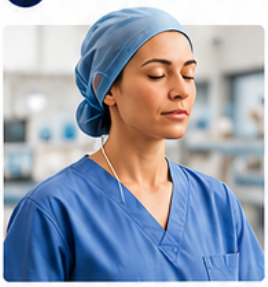
BENEFITS: Rapidly lowers stress, muscle tension, and heart rate; improves clarity.

2 BOX BREATHING — 1 min



BENEFITS: Enhances focus, improves emotional regulation, centers you before challenging cases.

3 THREE-BREATH TRANSITION — 10 sec



Take one slow, intentional breath:

- Before entering the OR
- Before incision
- After case completion

BENEFITS: Creates mental boundaries and smoother transitions; reduces stress accumulation.

DURING SURGERY *Stay present, reduce tension, maintain performance.*

4 EXTENDED EXHALE BREATHING — 30–60 sec



Inhale for 4

Exhale for 6–8

Repeat several rounds.

BENEFITS: Calms the nervous system, reduces adrenaline buildup, can be done while scrubbing or charting.

5 SHOULDER RESET — 15 sec



Roll shoulders up, back, and down.

Then gently squeeze shoulder blades together.

BENEFITS: Releases tension in neck and shoulders, improves posture awareness.

6 VISUAL HORIZON BREAK — 15–30 sec



Look at something 20+ feet away (out a window or down the hall). Focus your eyes on the distance.

BENEFITS: Relaxes eye muscles, provides a mental reset, reduces visual fatigue.

7 HYDRATION CHECKPOINT — 30 sec



Take a drink of water between cases and during natural breaks.

BENEFITS: Supports cognition, energy, and physical performance. Even mild dehydration impairs focus and decision-making.

BETWEEN CASES / AFTER SURGERY *Reset your body and mind.*

8 CERVICAL DECOMPRESSION — 20 sec



Gently lengthen through the crown of the head.

Bring ear toward shoulder.

Switch sides.

BENEFITS: Relieves neck stiffness caused by prolonged static posture.

9 STANDING BACK EXTENSION — 10 sec



Hands on hips or low back.

Gently arch backward.

Look slightly upward.

BENEFITS: Counters forward posture, relieves low-back strain.

10 WRIST & FOREARM RELEASE — 30 sec



Wrist Extensor Stretch

Wrist Flexor Stretch

BENEFITS: Decreases hand and forearm fatigue, improves circulation and range of motion.

11 MICRO-MOBILITY CIRCUIT — 60 sec



Shoulder Rolls (5x) | Back Extension (5x) | Neck Stretch (each side) | Three Slow Breaths

BENEFITS: Releases full-body tension, improves circulation, resets posture and energy.

12 END-OF-DAY NERVOUS SYSTEM SHUTDOWN — 2 min



BENEFITS: Signals your body and mind that the work is complete. You'll leave calmer, recover faster, and sleep better.

HOW TO IMPLEMENT

- Start small. Seconds matter.
- Use natural transitions (between cases, whiles scrubbing, or charting).
- Consistency > perfection.
- Your nervous system thrives on frequent, brief resets.

BENEFITS: Signals your body and mind that the work is complete. You'll leave calmer, recover faster, and sleep better.

PERFORM AT YOUR BEST. PROTECT YOUR BODY. CARE FOR YOUR MIND.
A stronger you is a stronger surgeon—for you, your team, and your patients.

Presented by Roxanne Steed, E-RYT 500, YACEP
Compass & Core | Yoga with Roxanne