The Mini (adapted from Benson Henry Institute)

A simple way to counter stress throughout the day, on the hour, or as needed is to practice mini relaxation response elicitation exercises or "minis". A mini can be used for an anticipated stressor or can be scheduled routinely. Minis can be down with eyes opened or closed, in any place, at any time; no one will know. Minis immediately reduce anxiety and tension. It is recommended to practice at least one to two minis each hour during the day. They can be as brief as one to two breaths, one yoga stretch or mudra, or as long as several minutes. It is helpful to couple minis with a behavior that is done frequently and regularly such as answering the phone, checking emails, sitting at stop lights. Visual cues such as post-it notes or sticker dots are also helpful reminders to do a mini.

Samples of Minis:

1. Inhale deeply and comfortably
Notice the natural pause between the in-breath and the out-breath. Allow yourself to comfortably rest in the pauses for a count of 3 seconds and repeat for 5 breaths

2. 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1
Count very slowly to yourself from ten to one using one number for each out breath.

3. Inhale 1-2-3-4 / Exhale 4-3-2-1
As you inhale, count very slowly up to four; as you exhale, count slowly down to one. Repeat for at least 5 breaths.

4. Inhale and hold
Inhale to the count of 4-6, hold full for the count of 2-4, exhale for the count of 6-8; repeat. Exaggerate on the "exhale" which is more closely linked to the parasympathetic system.

5. Physical
Take a minute and combine breath awareness with a physical focus like self massage, stretching and yawning, sitting stretches or yoga posture, or walk counting 4 paces as you breathe in and four paces as you breathe out. Or, coordinate your breath with any other activity such as washing dishes, lifting weights, biking, etc.

6. Imagery
Picture yourself in a place you find relaxing or imagine a scene in nature. Imagine what it would feel like to be one of the following:
    Tree (strong, rooted, expansive)
    Mountain (timeless, strong, stable)
    Wave (fluid, limitless)
    Sun (radiant, warm)

7. Mindfulness
Pay attention to the sounds around you, noticing even faint and constant sounds, like electrical appliances or traffic outside. You don't have to like or dislike them, simply accept what sounds are there. Which is the closest? Which is the farthest away? Can you hold attention on both the closest and farthest sounds at the same time?

8. Feeling an antidote to stress
As you breathe in, focus on your current stress-related feeling. As you breathe-out, focus on a feeling that would counter that stress.

9. Follow the breath
As you inhale, feel the coolness of the breath entering the nostrils and follow the breath down deep into the belly. As you exhale imagine pouring the breath out, tipping the pitcher and follow it as it flows out your nostrils and feel the slightly warmer temperature of the breath.

10. Contemplation
Since whatever we focus on is brought into our experience, you can support the cultivation of adaptive perspectives with a mini. As you breathe in, focus on a simple, present tense phrase that reflects a desired quality, such as, "I'm filled with confidence". As you breathe out, you can repeat the focus, or add another desired focus, such as "I am strong". Or if you prefer you can substitute a symbolic image to represent one or both qualities.

11. I am, at peace
On your inhale think "I am"; on your exhale think "at peace".

12. Single-pointed mini *(adapted from Thich Nhat Hanh)*
Breathing in, I know I am breathing in. / Breathing out, I know I am breathing out.
As the in-breath deepens / the out-breath slows.
Breathing in makes me calm. / Breathing out brings me ease.
As I breathe in, I smile. / As I breathe out, I release.
Breathing in, there is only the present moment. / Breathing out, it is a wonderful moment.

or:

In-breath:	*Out-breath:*
In	Out
Deep	Slow
Calm	Ease
Smile	Release
Present	Moment
Wonderful	Moment

13. Dr. Weil's 4-7-8 Breath
Inhale to the count of 4, hold full for the count of 7, exhale to the count of 8 and repeat.