

## **Breathing Techniques**

Controlled and deep breathing can help promote relaxation, lower the heart rate, calm anxiety and release the flight and fight responses in the body.

Some big fancy words you can use regarding the body and how breathing can help regulate include the sympathetic nervous system and parasympathetic nervous system:

Sympathetic nervous system: This becomes active when your mind or body senses a threat. You become more alert, you may feel anxiety and you could respond in a fight or flight response.

Parasympathetic nervous system: This works in the opposite direction in that it calms your body and nervous system. Activating the Parasympathetic nervous system brings relaxation to your mind and body. Controlled breathing techniques helps activate this system in the body.

### **Box Breathing**

Count of 4 or 6

To do this, sit comfortably and place one hand on your stomach.

Inhale through your nose to the count in seconds 1, 2, 3, 4 and fill your entire lungs. Feel your hand raise and your lungs pressing against your rib cage. Hold that breath for the count of 4 seconds

Exhale through your mouth to a count of 4 and hold your lungs empty for a count of 4.

Repeat this 3 to 4 times but stop immediately if you are feeling light headed or dizzy.

As you progress through this skill, try to extend the time you can do this (Inhale to the count of 6, hold for 6, exhale for 6 and hold for 6). Notice how you feel.

### **Pursed Lips Breathing**

To do this, sit comfortably and place your hands in a comfortable position (on your knees, thighs, belly, by your side).

Close your eyes and inhale through your nose to fill your lungs. Purse your lips like you are going to blow a kiss and exhale until your lungs are empty. Repeat as necessary but stop immediately if you are feeling light headed or dizzy. Notice how you feel.

### **Alternating Nostril Breathing**

This breathing technique takes some concentration. Using the alternating sides of your body (bilateral stimulation) can have a calming effect releasing tension.

To do this, sit comfortably and place your hands in a comfortable position (on your knees, thighs, belly, by your side).

Using one hand, cover one nostril with your thumb. Inhale through just the one nostril.

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To exhale, take your thumb off your nostril and place the ring finger of the same hand over the opposite nostril and exhale. Inhale through the nostril you just exhaled through and switch your fingers back. Take your ring finger off your nostril, place your thumb over the opposite nostril and exhale. Repeat as necessary but stop immediately if you are feeling light headed or dizzy. Notice how you feel.

The whole event should include rotating inhalation and exhalation between your nostrils:

1. Cover left nostril.
2. Inhale from right nostril and cover, uncover and exhale through left nostril.
3. Inhale through left nostril and cover, uncover and exhale through right nostril.

## **Vocal Exhalation**

Releasing a sound as you exhale can expel tension from the body.

To do this, sit comfortably and place your hands in a comfortable position (on your knees, thighs, belly, by your side).

Inhale completely through nostrils to the count of 4, filling the lungs. Hold the breath for 7 seconds.

Then with an open mouth, exhale with a sound. You can do a steady 'Aaahhhh' sounds or the "OM" sound. Repeat as necessary. Notice how you feel.

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### References/Resources:

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