



Take a BOW

How do I calm my anxious mind? How do I slow down my racing thoughts, churning stomach, and pounding heart? By taking a **BOW**. Breathe. Observe. Write.

BREATHE. Our breath is SUCH a powerful thing. There is a plethora of scientific evidence showing how you can use your breath to calm your nervous system, slow your heartbeat, and heal your physical and emotional body in a variety of ways. Think of the air as purifying you, nourishing you, supporting you. Maybe even imagine the air as swirling energy or dots or waves of a specific color you associate with relaxation, health, healing, strength, nourishment, or whatever it is that you are needing in a given moment. You can practice by simply counting to 3. Breath in, 1. Breath out, 1. Breath in, 2. Breath out, 2. Breath in, 3. Breath out, 3. Every inbreath can be taking in restoration or revitalization. Each out-breath can be a letting go of anxiety, anger, tension, irritability. Each breath signals a new beginning—an opportunity. You can bring yourself to the present moment simply by focusing on your breath. Use your breath to center yourself, ground yourself, and get out of your head when thinking about the past or future.

OBSERVE. Observe your breath. Observe your body. Observe your thoughts—Doing all of this as an outsider, like you are a visitor to a foreign land. Notice what comes up. Be curious, as though you are an explorer seeking only to learn, not judge or change or control. It may help to imagine what is currently happening as a scene in a movie so you can get a new, more detached perspective on the observation of yourself and your moment-to-moment experience. For your thoughts, it can help to imagine yourself sitting on the curb of a street, watching the thoughts pass by like cars. You see them come, you watch them go. This curious detachment can help you to calm down when upset, slow your thoughts down, slow your physiological reaction in moments of stress, and take a moment to respond rather than react. You can develop the skills to have a witnessing awareness of your own life.

WRITE. Write. Write. Write. A great tool to improve your mood, life satisfaction, and overall sense of well-being is to keep a gratitude journal. Write a few things each day, either in the morning or at night, that you are grateful for. Writing about what you're feeling, thinking, and experiencing in any given moment can be immensely helpful and therapeutic as well. I keep a journal with me wherever I go so I can jot down thoughts or reactions at any time I am finding myself out of alignment or feeling unsettled about something. Sometimes, just writing everything that is in your head and getting it on paper is enough to help you “shed the sh**” and takes away the emotional heat of it.

If you're struggling and using the journaling as an opportunity to reflect and shift something, write out all the negative sh**. Be specific. For each negative piece of sh** (POS), write it out. Then ask yourself, am I 100% sure without a shadow of a doubt that this POS is true? What is the evidence to the contrary? Write all of that out. Write out the EXACT opposite of the negative POS thought/belief. Then write out: “I choose THAT one instead.” Then, let it go. Maybe even crumple the paper up, tear it up, burn it, or eat it (J/K).

When in doubt, take a **BOW**. Or at least take a B. or an O. or a W. ;)