
Calming The Body: Deep Breathing

During periods of anxiety, the body triggers the Fight or Flight Response. Breathing is shallow, uncontrolled, and muscles become tense. Deep breathing triggers the Relaxation Response, whereby breathing becomes deeper, controlled, slower, and the symptoms of anxiety reduce.

Sit or lie down comfortably. Close your eyes if it makes you feel more comfortable. Place your hand on your stomach, if you breathe deeply enough, you should notice your hand rising and falling with each inhalation and exhalation. Imagine a balloon blowing up in your stomach as you breathe in, and deflating as you breathe out.



1. Inhale. Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4-8 seconds.



2. Pause. Hold the air in your lungs for 4- 8 seconds (however long is most comfortable for you).



3. Exhale. Breathe out slowly through your mouth for 4-8 seconds.

Repeat. Practice for at least 2 minutes. As your technique improves, practice for 5-10 minutes.

Tips

1. Slow down. The most common mistake is breathing too quickly. Count each step slowly as you do so.
2. Counting your breaths takes your mind off the source of anxiety. Counting acts as a distraction, whenever you catch your mind wandering, return to counting.

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