

BREATHING EXERCISES

When you become stressed, without usually being aware of it, you breathe more shallowly. If you want to squash a feeling, you will hold your breath. Breathing exercises are very important to help improve lung capacity, keep you calm and relaxed and to help you begin to contact the feelings underlying anxiety.

MOTHER BREATH

This can be done at any time and is a good way to improve your breathing generally.

Breathe in for a count of 7

Hold for a count of 1

Breathe out for a count of 7

Hold for a count of 1

RELAXATION BREATH

This exercise is good to relax before sleep and is also useful to do before going into a situation you feel will be stressful.

Breathe in for a count of 7

Breathe out for a count of 22

It is essential to reach 22 before breathing in. If you are running out of air, count faster! This may sound hard to do, but after some practice it becomes quite easy. Once you have even counting, slow down the rate. Do this exercise lying down, to help relax your rib cage and only do 5 breaths at a time. Wait for a few minutes before getting up or you can feel dizzy. If after 10 minutes you still feel tense, repeat.

EMERGENCY BREATH

This can help stop a panic attack if you do it as soon as anxiety levels start to go up. Close off one nostril and breathe slowly through the other. Swap over and breathe out through the other nostril. This slows down your breathing and brings your focus onto your breathing rather than your anxiety.

BROWN PAPER BAG

Keep a brown paper bag handy in the car or your purse. Breathe into it for one to two minutes when you notice yourself hyperventilating.

CANDLE

Practice blowing out a lit candle with a long slow breath. As you get better, move the candle further away. This also gives you a visual cue as to how your breathing is going.

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