

Calming Breath Exercise Adapted by Spring to Life March 2022

‘The calming breath exercise’ is very efficient at achieving a deep state of relaxation quickly. Practice it regularly and it will become natural and will bring adrenalin /cortisol levels down.

Its like moving from automatic to manual gear in your brain and body! The shift is the significant part! Then breathe calmly and slowly and deeply. This exercise should be done at calm moments so that the body knows how to adjust in moments of stress. It does take practice but it’s surprising how quickly you can build up the ‘body memory’ and increase the speed of change to reach a state of ‘Peace and Calm’, lowering anxiety and managing stress responses more quickly. (Counting for length of in and out breaths is optional – you choose!)

1. Breathe in to your abdomen, inhale through your nose – feel the breath and slowly and deeply (count to 7) . Try putting your tongue on the roof of your mouth. Feel your waist expanding out.
2. Pause and hold your breath slightly before breathing out. Gradually increase the length of time you can do this. (Start at 2 and build up to 5 or more)
3. Exhale slowly, through your mouth, (increasing to a count of 11 if you can) - as long as it takes to exhale fully in a calm way. Try tucking your tongue behind your bottom teeth as you breath out. Be sure to exhale completely until you feel your waist shrinking in and your stomach tucking in behind your ribs. You could hold your hand on your stomach to feel your abdomen rising and falling as you breathe deeply.
4. When you’ve exhaled completely, either take 2 breaths in your normal rhythm, or continue repeating steps 1-3 a few more times depending on how much time you have! But actually it can be surprising how little time it takes to calm your body and mind when you use breathing regularly – on purpose to calm yourself!
5. If you begin to feel light headed, stop for 30seconds and start again. In busy life we often breath shallow and fast. When stressed we even hold our breath! So breathing deeply and slowly can feel counter intuitive. We are aiming to gradually increase your tolerance of slower calmer breathing with longer holds.
6. Keep breathing *smooth* and *regular breaths* . Avoid taking gulps (or gasps) of air in or breathing out suddenly as this sends the wrong messages to the brain!
7. Optional; each time you exhale, you may wish to say silently, a calming word ; peace, relax, calm, let go ... if you keep practicing this it will eventually induce mild relaxation just by saying the word.
8. The calming breath exercise can be a potent technique for stopping the escalation of anxiety/panic and anger when the 1st signs of them arise.

Adapted from The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook. Edmund Bourne. Spring to Life has Updated this March 2022. Please acknowledge both if you copy on this worksheet.

