

THE

BREATHING

TOOLBOX



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INTRODUCTION

Breathing is an amazing tool to use to decrease anxiety, relieve stress and to centre yourself in times of distress and panic.

It's one of the most fundamental and important skills you can utilise for restoring a sense of calm and balance to your wellbeing. The fantastic thing is, it's *always* right there for you to call on when you need. It's a strategy that you can use anywhere, anytime, without anyone noticing.

Harnessing the power of your breath is so effective because your breath is your direct link to your parasympathetic nervous system – Your nervous system has two branches: the sympathetic nervous system and the parasympathetic nervous system.

When you feel stressed, your threat response is activated, and you are in a sympathetic nervous system dominant state. You may feel anxious, you might notice your breath becomes short, sharp and shallow. You may find it hard to catch your breath or begin to hyperventilate.

Your body will respond in all sorts of physical ways not only not anxiety, but also as a result of over-breathing and throwing out the balance of carbon dioxide and oxygen in your body. When this balance is tipped, you may notice feelings of nausea, light headedness, dizziness, numbness or tingling hands & feet, a racing heart and even more anxiety – a bit of a vicious cycle.

That is *why* breathing techniques are so useful. When you can control your breath, you activate the *parasympathetic* nervous system. This branch is responsible for the 'rest, digest and restore' function in your body. It turns on to calm you down again and to regulate your sympathetic nervous system/threat response.

Breathing techniques are your *direct* link to activating this calming function of your body. This Breathing Toolbox is full of fabulous breathing techniques for you to try.

Remember that, like all strategies, these tools take practise and repetition to be their most effective.

BREATHING RATE RECORD

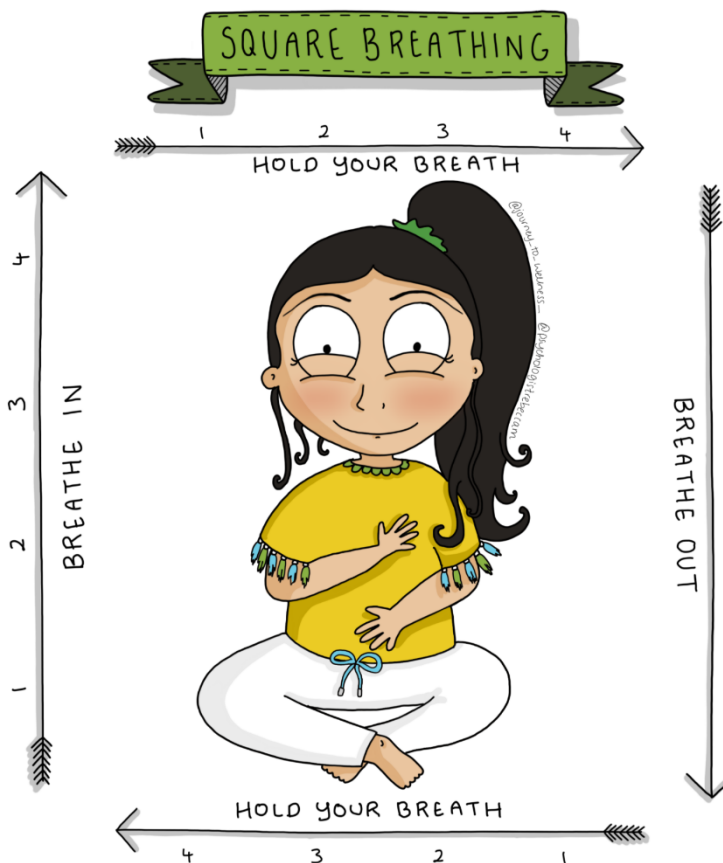
HOW TO: SET A TIMER ON YOUR PHONE FOR 1 MINUTE
START THE TIMER & BEGIN COUNTING YOUR BREATHS
(A BREATH IN, THEN A BREATH OUT COUNTS AS 1 BREATH)
TRY NOT TO ALTER THE WAY YOU BREATHE & DON'T DO IT RIGHT AFTER ANY EXERCISE.

STEP 1

WRITE YOUR NUMBER | BREATHING RATE HERE:

____ BREATHS
PER MINUTE

DID YOU KNOW... A NORMAL BREATHING RATE FOR AN ADULT IS BETWEEN 12 - 20 BREATHS PER MINUTE.



IF YOU ARE BREATHING FASTER THAN THIS, IT THROWS OUT THE BALANCE OF O_2 & CO_2 IN YOUR BODY - INDICATING STRESS & CAUSING SYMPTOMS LIKE...

- ☐ FEELING FAINT
- ☐ FEELING ANXIOUS
- ☐ DIZZINESS OR TINGLING
- ☐ TIGHT CHEST
- ☐ PAIN IN CHEST
- ☐ FREQUENT YAWNS OR SIGHS
- ☐ FASTER HEARTBEAT
- ☐ LIGHTHEADED

STEP 2

NOW TRY THIS BREATHING TECHNIQUE FOR 5 MINUTES.

STEP 3

NEXT, REPEAT STEP 1. WRITE YOUR NEW BREATHING RATE HERE:

____ BREATHS
PER MINUTE

→ DID YOUR RATE DECREASE AFTER CALMING YOUR BREATH WITH THE BREATHING TECHNIQUE?

BREATHING RATE RECORD

IF YOU NOTICED YOU HAD A HIGH BREATHING RATE, OR THAT YOUR BREATHING BECOMES FASTER WHEN YOU ARE ANXIOUS OR STRESSED - TRY OUT THIS DAILY TOOL & TRACKER.

HOPEFULLY YOU WILL NOTICE THAT OVER TIME, DUE TO DAILY PRACTICE, YOUR 'BEFORE RATE' & SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY WILL DECREASE.

HOW TO:

STEP 1 TAKE YOUR 'BEFORE' BREATHING RATE (SEE STEP 1 FROM PAGE 1). WRITE INTO THE LOG BELOW.

STEP 2 DO 3-5 MINUTES OF THE CALMING BREATHING TECHNIQUE (ON PAGE 1).

STEP 3 TAKE YOUR 'AFTER' BREATHING RATE (SEE STEP 1 FROM PAGE 1). WRITE INTO THE LOG BELOW.

STEP 4 REPEAT STEPS 1-3, THREE TIMES PER DAY (SPACE THEM OUT) FOR THE NEXT WEEK.

WRITE YOUR RESULTS IN THE LOG BELOW

TAKE NOTE OF HOW YOU FEEL AFTERWARDS & ANY IMPROVEMENTS IN YOUR SYMPTOMS OF 'OVERBREATHING'.

	TIME: _____		TIME: _____		TIME: _____	
	RATE BEFORE:	RATE AFTER:	RATE BEFORE:	RATE AFTER:	RATE BEFORE:	RATE AFTER:
DAY 1						
DAY 2						
DAY 3						
DAY 4						
DAY 5						
DAY 6						
DAY 7						

ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATH



LOWERS STRESS & ANXIETY,
IMPROVES LUNG FUNCTION, LOWERS
HEART RATE, HELPS WITH HEADACHES.

- ① SIT COMFORTABLY, LEGS
CROSSED
- ② EXHALE FULLY THEN USE YOUR
RIGHT THUMB TO CLOSE YOUR
RIGHT NOSTRIL.
- ③ INHALE THROUGH YOUR LEFT NOSTRIL
& THEN CLOSE YOUR LEFT NOSTRIL WITH
YOUR RING FINGER.
- ④ INHALE THROUGH YOUR RIGHT NOSTRIL
& THEN CLOSE YOUR RIGHT NOSTRIL WITH
YOUR THUMB
- ⑤ REPEAT CYCLE FOR UP TO 5 MINUTES,
FINISHING ON AN EXHALE.



HOT CHOCOLATE BREATH



1. HOLD YOUR HANDS OUT IN FRONT OF YOU, AS IF YOU WERE HOLDING A MUG OF HOT CHOCOLATE.
2. BREATHE IN SLOWLY, IMAGINING YOU ARE INHALING THAT WARM COCO SMELL, THROUGH YOUR NOSE.
3. GENTLY EXHALE THROUGH YOUR MOUTH, LIKE YOU WERE TRYING TO COOL DOWN THE HOT CHOCOLATE BEFORE YOU TAKE A SIP.

☺ REPEAT - NOTICE AS YOU FEEL MORE CALM. YOU MAY EVEN NOTICE YOUR HANDS FEELING WARM.

NOTE: You can try this technique out using different tasty smells too... You could imagine you are inhaling the aroma of hot coffee, pumpkin soup, your favourite stew, a tasty meal etc...

BREATHING AFFIRMATIONS

ON AN INHALE,
IN YOUR MIND SAY...

MY MIND IS RELAXED

I AM SAFE

INHALE CALM

RELAXING

ON AN EXHALE,
IN YOUR MIND SAY...

MY BODY IS RELAXED

I AM SECURE

EXHALE TENSION

LETTING GO



affirmations are a great way to retrain your brain and to inject some positivity, reassurance and realism into your thoughts.

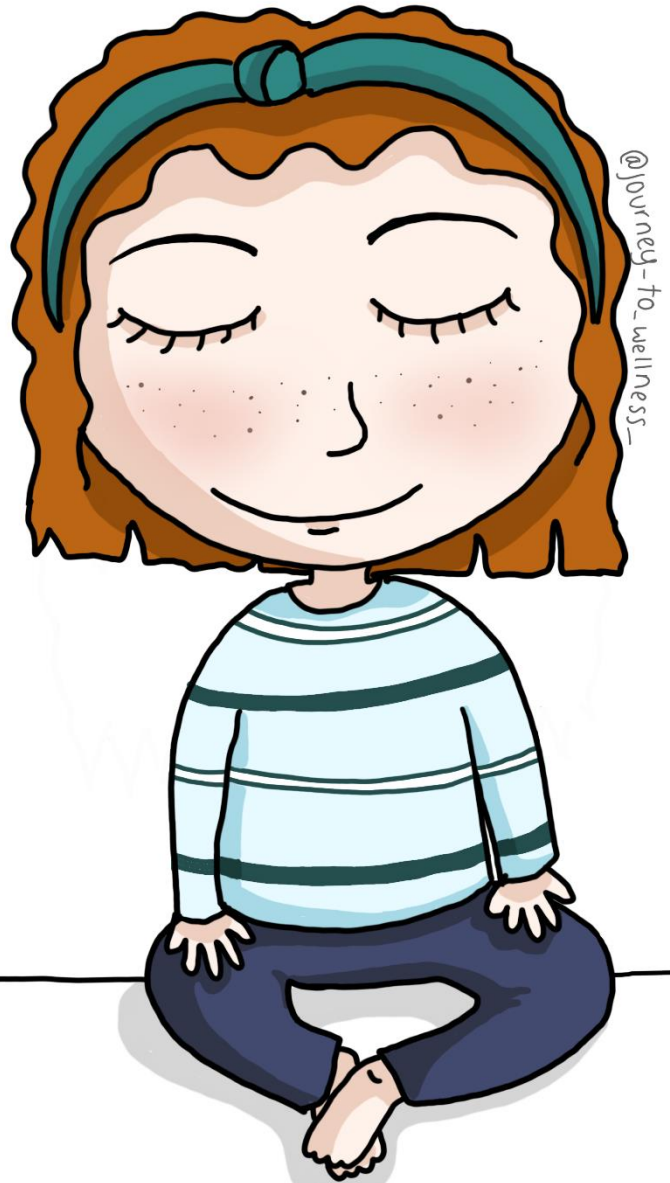
The combination of affirmations and the gentle alignment with your inhale & exhale is a powerful and calming breathing technique – Very useful for anxiety, panic and stress.

MINDFUL BREATH MANTRA

INHALE

MY MIND IS RELAXED
MY BODY IS RELAXED

EXHALE &
DROP SHOULDERS



When you feel anxious and stressed it is common to carry muscle tension in your body; often entirely unconsciously. The shoulders, jaw, forehead, neck and glutes are often clenched and tense. This breathing technique helps to bring awareness to the shoulders, dropping them gently. You will probably be surprised how this simple act can make a real difference in releasing tightness and strain in your body and mind. This, combined with a soothing mantra, is bound to activate your sense of calm!

THE RESET BREATH



How?

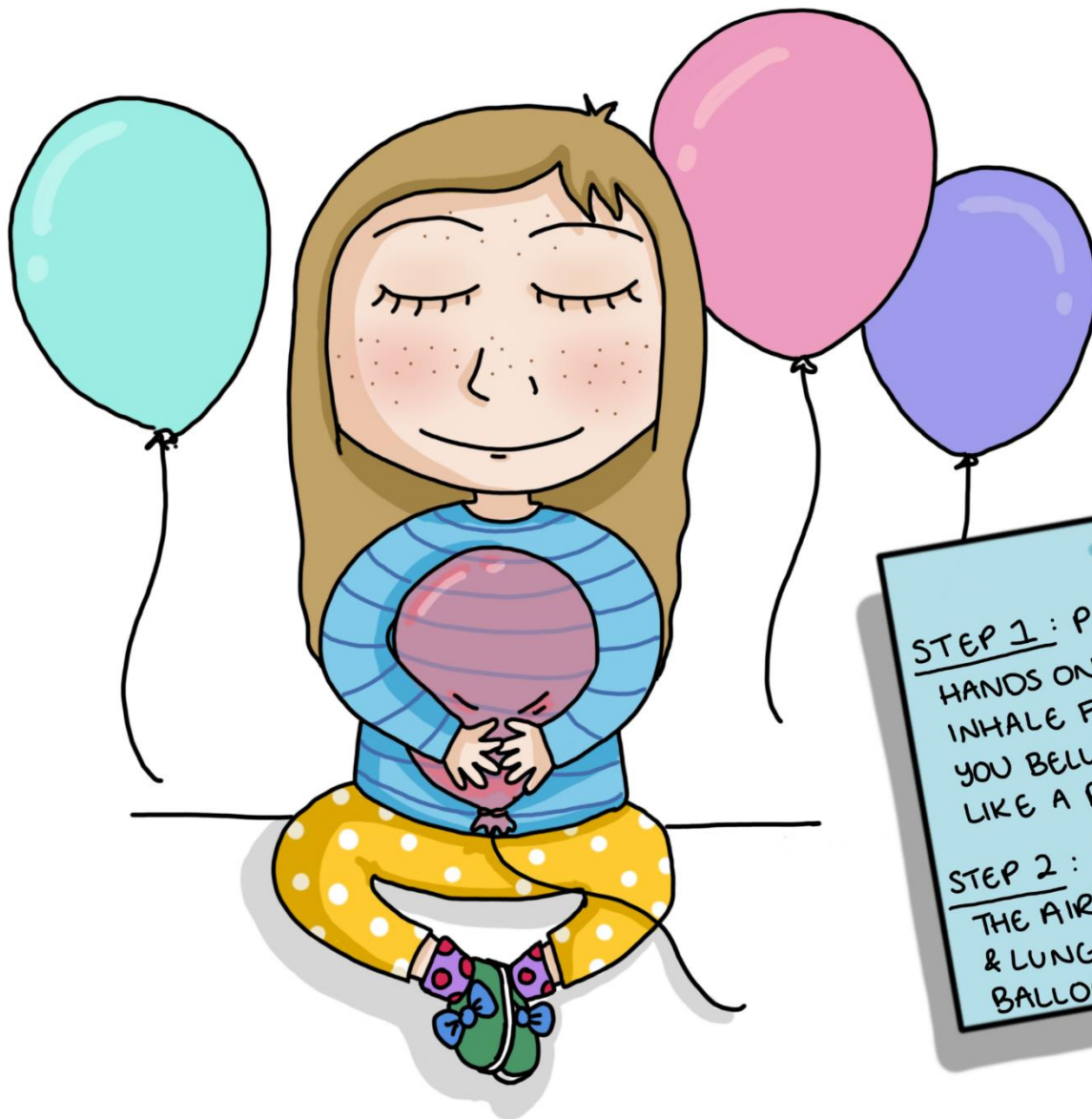
- ① Take in the biggest deepest breath you can.
- ② Blow out quickly & as hard as you can through your mouth.

Why?

- Relaxes diaphragm.
- Begins to regulate agitated breathing.

† ONLY DO THIS ONCE OR TWICE!

BALLOON BREATH



STEP 1 : PLACE YOUR HANDS ON YOUR BELLY & INHALE FULLY, IMAGINE YOU BELLY IS BLOWING UP LIKE A BALLOON.

STEP 2 : SLOWLY EXHALE ALL THE AIR FROM YOUR BELLY & LUNGS AS YOU FEEL YOUR BALLOON DEFLATE.

It is common to breath into your chest, with short and shallow breaths when you feel stressed and anxious.

Learning to re-direct your breath into your belly can be quite tricky at first and take a bit of practice. It is very calming once you get the hang of it and helps to relieve tension in the stomach.

BUBBLE BREATH



STEP 1 : TAKE A LONG, SLOW INHALE THROUGH YOUR NOSE.

STEP 2 : EXHALE SLOWLY THROUGH YOUR LIPS, AS THOUGH YOU WERE BLOWING BUBBLES.

STEP 3 : IMAGINE EACH OUT-BREATH RELEASES UNHELPFUL & UNWANTED THOUGHTS INTO THE BUBBLES & OUT OF YOUR BODY.

STEP 4 : IMAGINE THE BUBBLES POPPING, RELEASING YOUR ATTACHMENT TO THE THOUGHT OR FEELING.

STEP 5 : WITH THE BUBBLE RELEASED, YOU CAN REPLACE IT WITH COMPASSION & KINDNESS FROM WITHIN.

It's common to have unhelpful thoughts, even intrusive ones. Just remember; not all thoughts are true! While we may not be able to control our thoughts, we can control how we respond to them.

This technique is a great one for harnessing your breath, and the power of imagery, to help release unwanted thoughts.

FOCUS ON YOUR BREATH

1. FOCUS ON YOUR BREATH.
2. WHEN YOUR MIND WANDERS, NOTICE IT, THEN BRING YOUR FOCUS BACK TO YOUR BREATH.
3. EACH TIME YOUR MIND GETS DISTRACTED AND FOLLOWS A THOUGHT, JUST NOTICE ... AND RETURN YOUR ATTENTION TO YOUR BREATH.



This is a fabulous mindfulness tool to train your brain to shift focus away from stressors and onto your breath in the present moment.

Pay attention to your breath as your way to anchor yourself to the here and now.

CANDLE BREATH

1. INHALE AS THOUGH YOU WERE SMELLING A SCENTED CANDLE.
2. EXHALE THROUGH YOUR MOUTH, PRETENDING YOU ARE BLOWING ON A CANDLE GENTLY ENOUGH FOR THE FLAME TO FLICKER, WITHOUT BLOWING IT OUT.



COUNT DOWN BREATH



CALM DOWN BY COUNTING
BACKWARDS FROM 10...

- BREATHE **IN** ON EACH
NUMBER YOU SAY IN YOUR
MIND.
- BREATHE **OUT** BETWEEN
EACH NUMBER.

The simple act of counting can be immensely
grounding and distracting for a worried and
anxious mind.

SWAY BREATHING

1. STAND UP TALL LIKE A TREE.

2. KEEPING YOUR FEET ON THE FLOOR, PRETEND YOU ARE BEING BLOWN BY THE WIND.

INHALE AS YOU SWAY TO THE LEFT.

3. EXHALE SLOWLY AS YOU SWAY TO THE RIGHT.

4. NOTICE HOW YOU FEEL AS YOU DO THIS EXERCISE.

The gentle motion of swaying your body is a type of vestibular soothing which many people find very calming

WEIGHTED BREATH

1. LIE DOWN ON THE FLOOR AND PLACE A BOOK ON YOUR TUMMY.
2. FOCUS YOUR BREATH TRAVELLING DOWN INTO YOUR BELLY,
3. MAKE THE BOOK RISE UP AND DOWN WITH EACH INHALE AND EXHALE.



Tip: You can use any weighted object to place on your tummy. You can experiment with placing the object on your legs or chest too. This proprioceptive activity provides a type of sensory soothing that can help you to self-regulate your nervous system and helps with sensory processing.

MY BREATHING PLAN

I WILL KNOW I NEED TO USE MY BREATHING TECHNIQUES WHEN....

THE BREATHING TECHNIQUES I FIND MOST EFFECTIVE ARE...

THE BREATHING TECHNIQUES I NEED TO WORK ON MORE ARE...

MY FAVOURITE BREATHING TECHNIQUE TO USE IS...

MY EXTRA NOTES/THOUGHTS ON BREATHING TECHNIQUES...