

Calming Breathing Exercise

There are some stressful situations that call for a quick relaxation technique to stop a rapid build-up of tension, especially when there is no opportunity for relieving this tension by doing other activities. For example, when lying in bed during the middle of the night, you may experience unwanted and persistent negative thoughts, however it may be difficult to get up and do some physical activity or listen to music to get rid of these thoughts. A simple emergency technique can help lower this tension.

Remember, mental stress will lessen when you relax your muscles. So, when you recognise your feelings of tension (e.g. lying in bed, experiencing unwanted negative thoughts and becoming more and more stressed), it is important to use the STOP technique to lower your tension before it gets out of hand. In these situations, you need to say sharply to yourself (either aloud or in your head):

STOP!

Or you can picture a stop sign in your head, to remind yourself to stop the negative thoughts and start reducing the tension.



Then, try and make yourself as comfortable as possible wherever you are - either lying down or sitting upright. Close your eyes. Place one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest.

Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose into your stomach to push up your hand as much as feels comfortable. Your chest should move only a little and only with your stomach. Notice the oxygen filling your lungs as you inhale and leaving your body as you exhale.

Focus on your hands moving up and down as you inhale and exhale. Begin to inhale through you nose and exhale through your mouth, gently blowing out as you exhale. Your mouth, tongue and jaw will be relaxed. Take long, slow, deep breaths which raise and lower your stomach. Focus on the sound and feeling of breathing as you become more and more relaxed.

- **Continue to slowly breathe in from your nose and out from your mouth, gently blowing out as you exhale.**
- **Do this several times. Breathe in and blow out. Breathe in and blow out.**

Slow your breathing right down now and visualise the word “relax” as you breathe out. Inhale deeply and then visualise “relax,” and again ... inhale and then “relax.” Continue to do this several timesinhale and then “relax” as you breathe out.... inhale and then “relax”....

Stay quiet for a few seconds and then go on with whatever you were doing, but move more slowly for a while to help remain in a relaxed state. Or, if having difficulties sleeping, you can continue breathing this way until you fall asleep.

This exercise can usually be done without anyone noticing and you can do it as often as you like. You can never really be too relaxed.