



## **Breathing Techniques**

Breathing techniques are extremely useful and powerful and are really useful for calming us when we feel anxious, and they can also be used:

- to calm Panic/Anxiety attacks
- To reduce hyperventilation
- to relax you at the end of a stressful day
- to get you ready for a busy day
- to manage anger outbursts
- to aid concentration before an exam/interview etc.
- almost any state which leads to high emotional arousal

## **7/11 Breathing**

### **What is 7/11 Breathing?**

- The 7/11 technique is a breathing exercise where you breathe in for a count of 7 and out for a count of 11. It is used to help you relax and reduce stress.

### **How does it work?**

In simple terms when we breathe in we get excited and when we breathe out we relax.

Because it needs a degree of concentration to work it helps us take our minds off what was worrying us in the first place. Also because it relaxes us, it gives access to the rational thinking part of the brain which gets shut down in stressful situations, allowing us to think our way around problems, etc.

It works on the bodies' autonomic nervous system. When we breathe in, receptors are stimulated to quicken our heartbeat, increase breathing rate and increase adrenalin production and when we breathe out receptors are stimulated to slow our heartbeat, reduce our breathing rate and decrease adrenaline production.

## **The exercise**

- Find somewhere comfortable and quiet to sit and relax.
- It helps, when you are first practicing, to sit in front of a mirror so that you can see your progress.
- Sit in a chair with your shoulders relaxed and your hands folded gently over your tummy.
- If possible breathe in and out through your nose. In for a count of 7 and out for a count of 11 (if you find it too hard to breathe out 11, start off with 3/6 and work up to 7/11. The important thing here is to breathe out longer than you breathe in).
- If you are doing it correctly your shoulders will remain still and your tummy will get bigger and smaller as you breathe (called belly or diaphragmatic breathing). If you sit in front of a mirror you can keep an eye on your shoulders and tummy.
- Once you can keep your shoulders still and relaxed without effort it can be helpful to close your eyes and try to picture the numbers in your mind's eye to help you concentrate completely on your breathing.
- If you are struggling with the breathing, another technique is to hold a book in front of you. Starting at the shortest side of the book, run your fingers along that edge whilst counting to 7. Then when you reach the corner and counted to 7, run your fingers along the longer side of the book whilst counting to 11.
- To get the best benefit from this exercise, practice it for 4 minutes, 3 times a day, so Sit that should you experience a stressful situation you are used to the exercise and can do it more easily.

## **Ocean / Infinity Breathing**

- As with 7/11 breathing this can be used in stressful situations, or to relax, and calm yourself.
- In this breathing you can breathe as deeply or as lightly as you are comfortable with. Imagine the waves of the ocean, they never stop, they move seamlessly in out and. Or imagine the Infinity sign – there are no edges to it, it's a continuous shape.
- So when you use this breathing, you can visualise either of the two examples above, or something else that helps you imagine continuous breathing.
- To get the best benefit from this exercise, practise it for 4 minutes, 3 times a day, so that should you experience a stressful situation you are used to the exercise and can do it more easily.

## **Diaphragmatic breathing, abdominal breathing, belly breathing or deep breathing**

- Again this breathing can be used to calm or relax yourself.
- Sit somewhere quiet, and make yourself comfortable (although in anxious situations this may not be possible, but a good idea when practising it)

- Start by noticing where you maybe holding any tension in your body – tighten any muscles even more and then let go and relax them
- Place your hands on your stomach, and take some nice deep breaths, filling your lungs up
- You should feel your stomach rising and falling with each breath
- Notice how each breath feels as it enters and leaves your body, (does it feel soft or harsh? Is there a difference between inward breaths against outward breaths?)
- To get the best benefit from this exercise, practise it for 4 minutes, 3 times a day, so that should you experience a stressful situation you are used to the exercise and can do it more easily

### **Combining all three techniques**

- At times of stress or anxiety, or in difficulty sleeping combining all three breathing techniques can be really helpful, and you can use them in any order you feel comfortable with, but carry out all three in rotation.
- You need to do 5 of each I turn for at least 3 times – more if you need to, especially if you find your mind wandering.
- Practice really is the key!

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