

Ways to Relax by Using Breathing

1. Triangle Breathing
2. Breathing from your Belly
3. Blowfish Breathing
4. Progressive Muscle Relaxation
5. Noodles, Tin Soldiers and Rag Dolls, Tacos and Soft Tortillas
6. Guided Mindfulness



NOTE: It is best to practice breathing and relaxation times when anxiety level is normal. This way the techniques will be most effective in times of stress. It is also good to practice them at times that are not always associated with falling asleep so that you don't get conditioned to fall asleep when you do them.

Rationale for Relaxation/Breathing

- When we are relaxed we have better judgment.
- When we are tense we tend to be impulsive.
- When anxiety or anger increases, we stop breathing or breathing changes.
- When we experience high levels of anxiety, we breathe from our chest.
- When our anxiety is lower, we breathe from our diaphragm.
- Our breathing can change the signal to our body about safety or danger. When we breathe from the chest, we are prepping ourselves for danger. We are charging our bodies for fight or flight. When we do this, we can reinforce anxiety. We can choose to stop reinforcing anxiety.
- When focused on breathing it is difficult to be simultaneously worrying.

Relaxation addresses:

- Anxiety
- Anger
- Sleep disturbance
- Headaches
- Sadness
- Depression

:

Breathing exercise one – Breathing from Your Belly:

Put one hand on your chest and one on your diaphragm. Mostly your diaphragm/belly should move and your chest should barely move and should follow your diaphragm. Or, lie on your back with something light on your belly and notice as your belly rises and falls with your breath.

Breathing exercise two -- Triangle:

Triangle Breathing. Imagine a triangle. Breathe while counting to 3 and imagining the first side of the triangle. Breathe out while counting to 6 and imagining the other two sides of the triangle. Repeat.

Breathing Exercise Three: Blowfish

Pretend you're a big blowfish; take a deep breath and hold it for about 10 seconds. Hold it in like a big round blowfish. Now, let it out and watch the air bubbles float up through the water. Raise both of your hands about halfway above the chair, pretend that you are reaching for a colorful rainbow, and breathe normally. Drop your hands and relax.

Breathing Exercise Four: Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Rationale:

- ☞ You cannot simultaneously be both tense and relaxed. It is important to teach yourself to know the difference.
- ☞ When you purposely tense your muscles your muscles will over compensate and become quite relaxed.
- ☞ It is difficult to have emotions that don't fit with a relaxed body.

Directions:

Notice your body in you chair, uncross you legs. Get comfy, take your shoes off if you want. You can close your eyes or keep them open. Don't worry about looking silly. We will all look silly together.

- Scrunch your toes – tight.....tighter.....tighter.....relax
- Bend your toes up toward your face – tight....tighter.....tighter.....relax
- Calves, hold your lower legs up under your chair
- Tighten your thighs and your bottom and feel yourself rise up in your chair
- Tighten your abdominal muscles
- Pull your shoulders in toward each other
- Scrunch your hands into a fist
- Now pull your hands in and cross them while scrunching your shoulders up toward your ear
- Tighten your jaw
- Scrunch up your face real tight – tight....tightertighterrelax

Now go back through your whole body and let go of any tension you might still feel in each place as you move through it. Notice the difference in places that are still tight and relax.

Breathing Exercise Five: Guided Mindfulness exercise

Three Minute Breathing Space *

1. AWARENESS

Bring yourself into the present moment by deliberately adopting an erect and dignified posture. If possible, close your eyes. Then ask:

“What is my experience right no...in thoughts...in feeling... and in bodily sensations?”

Acknowledge and register your experience, even if it is unwanted.

2. GATHERING

The, gently redirect full attention to breathing, to each in-breath and to each out-breath as they follow, one after the other:

Your breath can function as an anchor to bring you into the present and help you tune into a state of awareness and stillness..

3. EXPANDING

Expand the field of your awareness around your breathing, so that it includes a sense of the body as a whole, your posture, and facial expression.

- from Teaching Mindfulness in Therapy reference of Segal, Williams, and Teasdale (2002, p. 184). Copyright 2002 by The Guildford Press.

RELAXATION TRAINING PRACTICE

Practice the relaxation method we learned in session today at least twice a day. Write down each day and time that you practice. Also, write down how tense or nervous you were before relaxing and then how relaxed you are after relaxing. Use a scale from 1 to 10, with 10 being the most nervous and tense you have ever felt and 1 being the most relaxed and calm you have ever felt. Bring this in with you to your next session.

Day: _____

Time 1: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Time 2: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Day: _____

Time 1: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Time 2: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Day: _____

Time 1: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Time 2: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Day: _____

Time 1: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Time 2: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Day: _____

Time 1: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Time 2: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Day: _____

Time 1: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Time 2: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Day: _____

Time 1: _____

Before: _____

After: _____

Time 2: _____

Before: _____

After: _____