SURREY NEUROPLASTICITY CLINIC

Breathing Techniques

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Breathing and the Brain

Your breath is a simple and powerful tool that can be used to regulate your nervous system. Breathing slowly and deeply activates your parasympathetic ("rest and digest") nervous system. On the other hand, breathing quickly and shallowly activates your sympathetic ("fight or flight") nervous system. The following exercises can be used when feeling stressed or anxious by activating your "rest and digest" nervous system.



Benefits

- ✳ Stress relief
- ✳ Regulates cortisol (stress hormone)
- ✳ Lowers heart rate
- ✳ Lowers blood pressure
- ✳ Activates relaxation response
- ✳ Improves oxygenation to tissues
- ✳ Reduces pain
- ✳ Relieves anxiety

Belly Breathing

1. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest.
2. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should stay still while your belly moves.
3. Breathe out through pursed lips as if you were whistling. Feel the hand on your belly go in, and use it to push all the air out.
4. Do this breathing 3-10 times. Take time with each breath.

Adapted from HealthLinkBC "Stress Management: Breathing Exercises for Relaxation"

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4-7-8 Breathing



1. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest, just like in belly breathing.
2. Take a deep, slow breath from your belly, and silently count to 4 as you breathe in.
3. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
4. Breathe out completely as you silently count to 8. Try to get all the air out of your lungs by the time you count to 8.
5. Repeat 3-10 times or until you feel calm.

Roll Breathing

1. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest. Notice how your hands move as you breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
2. Fill your lower lungs by breathing so that your “belly” hand goes up when you inhale and your “chest” hand remains still. Do this 8 -10 times.
3. Next, inhale first into your lower lungs as before, and then continue inhaling into your upper chest. Breathe slowly and regularly. As you do so, your “chest” hand will rise and your “belly” hand will fall.
4. As you exhale slowly through your mouth, make a quiet, whooshing sound as first your “belly” hand and then your “chest” hand falls.
5. Practice breathing in and out this way for 3-5 minutes. Notice that the movement of your belly and chest rises and falls like the motion of rolling waves.

Tips

- ✳ You can do these exercises in any comfortable position. But while you are learning, it’s best to lie on your back with your knees bent.
- ✳ Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
- ✳ Notice how you feel at the end of each exercise.
- ✳ Consistent, daily practice will make these techniques more effective when you are feeling stressed or anxious.
- ✳ Try incorporating a breathing exercise into your bedtime routine to help relax into a deep sleep.

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