

Relaxation Techniques

Technique #1: Deep Breathing

Research has shown that deep breathing can help:

- Increase feelings of peacefulness and calm
- Decrease feelings of stress and overwhelm.
- Slow heartrate
- Lower/stabilize blood pressure
- Increase energy levels
- Decrease Muscle tension
- Relieve pain



The Basics:

Place one hand on the chest and one hand on the belly. When you take a deep breath in, the hand on the abdomen should rise higher than the one on the chest. This ensures that the breath is deep (in the belly) and not shallow (in the chest alone). Once you establish that you are breathing into your belly, you may lower your hands to your lap.

Inhale slowly and comfortably through the nose for a count of 3

Exhale gently and slowly through the mouth for a count of 6, until the lungs are totally empty (Tip: Make your exhale several counts longer than your inhale; this will have the effect of slowing down your heartrate)

Notice what it feels like to inhale, and what it feels like to exhale. Where in the body can you detect that you are inhaling and where in your body do you feel the exhale? (Do you feel a difference in your nose, your throat, your mouth, your chest, how your weight is distributed on the chair?)

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Beyond the basics:

While continuing to inhale slowly through your nose and exhale gently through your mouth, you might try one or more of the following:

- *On the exhale, think of a calming word like “relax,” “calm,” “release,” or “let go.”*
- *As you continue to breathe, allow the corners of your mouth to turn up gently in a half-smile. Maintain the half smile as you continue to breathe.*
- *Close your eyes and scan your body from head to toe, looking for areas where you feel pain or tension. When you find an area of your body that feels uncomfortable, direct your breath to that area. Breathe into the feeling of discomfort; allow tension to melt away on the exhale.*
- *Close your eyes and imagine you are alone in a calm, peaceful place. It may be a real place you’ve been, or simply a beautiful place in your imagination. Imagine every detail of this place: what you see, what you smell, what sounds you hear. This place is completely safe and completely peaceful. Immerse yourself in your peaceful place and linger there as you continue to breathe and relax. This place will always be there for you when you need a quiet, serene moment to yourself.*
- *Imagine yourself as a leaf floating on the surface of a gently flowing stream. Allow the stream to carry you where it will. Simply observe what it feels like to float on the surface of the water; watch tree branches and clouds pass by overhead. Relax and know that you are in good hands.*

