

Relaxation and Breathing

Relaxation response exercises can be practiced anywhere.

Physically, the calming power of these exercises emerges as the way we breathe is changed.

Many of us have the habit of breathing shallowly through our mouth, but these exercises will help us learn to breathe more deeply and purposefully, using our nose and abdomen instead.

This kind of breathing enhances oxygen exchange, and is a fine way to take a step back when symptoms of stress emerge.

Try one or more of these exercises that are here. You can do these exercises anywhere, and the more often you do such exercises the more relaxed you will feel.

#1

Count down **SLOWLY** from ten to zero. Take one complete breath, inhaling and then slowly exhaling, with each number.

For example, breathe in deeply saying “ten” to yourself. Breathe out slowly. Say “nine” as you inhale the next breath, and so on.

If you feel light-headed, count down more slowly to space your breaths further apart. When you reach zero, you should feel more relaxed. If not, go through the exercise again.

Each time you breathe in, inhale peace. Each time you breathe out let go of tension or discomfort.

Feel yourself settling into a quiet place at any time.

#2

Place your hand just beneath your navel so you can feel the gentle rise and fall of your belly when you breathe.

As you breathe in, count **SLOWLY** from one to four.

As you breathe out, count very **SLOWLY** from four down to one.

Continue inhaling and exhaling **SLOWLY** as you count several times, or as long as you care to do so.

Each time you breathe in, inhale peace. Each time you breathe out let go of tension or discomfort.

Feel yourself settling into a quiet place at any time.

#3

Sit quietly and focus on your breathing. Breathe in slowly through your nose and out through your mouth.

Quietly say to yourself, “I am” as you breathe in and “at peace” as you breathe out.

Repeat this phrase **SLOWLY** to yourself a few times, then visualize a feeling of peace and calm.

Each time you breathe in, inhale peace. Each time you breathe out let go of tension or discomfort.

Feel yourself settling into a quiet place at any time.

#4

Sit quietly and focus on your breath, breathing in slow, easy breaths down into your belly, breathing in a feeling of peace and relaxation, and breathing out tension or stress.

Think of a box. It can be any size, any color.

Take any worries or concerns-anything you might be anxious about-and put them in the box.

Close the box and put it safely on a shelf, away from you.

Remember you can take the box down at any time, but right now you can leave it safely on the shelf.

Breathe in and out slowly.

Each time you breathe in, inhale peace. Each time you breathe out let go of tension or discomfort.

Feel yourself settling into a quiet place at any time.