

Anxiety & Stress Management Strategies



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Stress Management Strategies



1 Breathing Waltz

Breathe in for the count of 3

Hold your breath for the count of 3

Breathe out for the count of 3

We are going to do some breathing activities which you can use anytime and anywhere to help to reduce anxiety and stress.

Sometimes for some strange reason, we naturally start to breathe rapidly and shallowly when we experience high stress or anxiety. Did you know that doing this can make us feel even more stressed or anxious? When we don't breathe slowly and deeply, we breathe out carbon dioxide more quickly than we make it, which can cause us to experience light-headedness, tingling, muscle tension, rapid heartbeat and a host of other anxiety symptoms.

We are going to breathe naturally for 1 minute (Show me how you breathe naturally) to create baseline BEFORE doing the breathing waltz - in and out = 1 breath

Hands up under 10 10-15 15-20

Do breathing waltz for 6/7 rounds (refer to kit sheet)

Things to say

Breathe in like you are smelling a flower, breathe out like you are blowing out birthday candles

Pretend your belly is a balloon. Breathe in and make the balloon bigger, then breathe out and make the balloon shrink.

Ask students to allow their breath to go back to whatever feels natural

Recount breathing for 1 minute

Any change? Ask for some examples.

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Mindful Breathing

Focus on your breath

If your mind starts wandering, gently acknowledge those thoughts and return your attention to your breathing

The intention of this brief exercise is to focus your attention on your breath as you allow thoughts and sensations to come and go in the background.

Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down. Put your feet flat on the ground and try to straighten your posture. Gently close your eyes. Let your shoulders drop down and away from your ears.

Pay attention to your breathing and just allow yourself to continue to breathe naturally.

Now, rest your hands gently on your belly with your fingertips of each hand lightly touching in the middle.

Breathe in slowly through your nose. And exhale through your mouth. Continue to take slow smooth deep breaths.

When you breathe in, notice your belly push your hands gently apart, as you fill your lower lungs with air. When you breathe out, notice your belly sink back towards your spine as you release your breath. You can imagine that your belly is a balloon. Fill it with air and then watch it deflate.

Now continue to focus on the gentle inhalation and exhalation of your breath. In...and out...

Now you may also become aware of physical sensations or feelings in your body. Simply notice them, and then again, bring your mind back to your breath. You don't need to analyze or give these thoughts or feelings any meaning in this moment. Simply acknowledge them without judgement and bring your mind back to your breath.

It's normal for your mind to wander. Simply notice that your mind has wandered and gently bring your attention back to your breath.

Continue to focus on your breathing and stay in this relaxed state for as long as you like.

When you are ready, slowly open your eyes and bring your attention back to your surroundings.

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Body Scan Meditation

This meditation can help you learn to identify what you are feeling and where you're feeling it.

It also helps you to release the stress in your body and mind.

At any time you feel uncomfortable or feel that this activity isn't working for you, simply open your eyes and sit quietly

Sit/lie in a comfortable position that you can sustain for the length of the exercise.

Gently close your eyes and focus on your breath. There is no need to change your breath in any way, just pay attention to the movement in your body as you breathe in and out. PAUSE

Draw all of your attention to the soles of your feet, noticing any sensations you are currently experiencing in your feet. You may, for example, notice the connection between the floor and your feet/shoes, the temperature of your feet, and any other sensations that are currently occurring. There is no need to change anything or label anything as good, bad or anything else. All you're doing is focusing your full attention on the soles of your feet. PAUSE

If your mind wanders off on a trail of thought, gently acknowledge that this has happened (without criticising yourself) and refocus your attention on the soles of your feet. PAUSE

Now shift your attention to your lower legs, and again take some time to notice any sensations that arise, without the need to change or label anything. PAUSE.

If you notice your mind getting hooked into thoughts or chatter, simply refocus all of your attention on your lower legs. PAUSE

Gently shift your attention now to your upper legs, noticing any sensations present in your upper legs. PAUSE.

It's natural for the mind to wander. If it does, gently refocus your attention on your upper legs. PAUSE

Now shift your attention to your lower back, going through the same process. PAUSE

Recognise if your mind's wandered, and without beating yourself up, refocus your attention on your lower back. PAUSE

Shifting your attention now to your upper back, again taking some time to observe any sensations that arise in your upper back. PAUSE

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Body Scan Meditation

Remember that it's quite natural for the mind to wander – if this has happened, guide your attention back to your upper back PAUSE

Gentle shift your attention now to your shoulders, being curious to note any sensations that arise in your shoulders. PAUSE

Should you find that your mind has gone elsewhere, simply acknowledge this and guide your focus back to your shoulders. PAUSE

Moving your focus now to your upper arms, observe any sensations that arise, without judgment or the need to analyse or label anything. PAUSE

If your mind is getting hooked in to thoughts, refocus your attention on your upper arms. PAUSE

Move your focus now to your hands, again taking some time to note any sensation that arise. PAUSE

Notice whether your mind is wandering and bring your awareness back to your hands. PAUSE

Shifting your focus now to your neck, again follow the same steps. PAUSE

Is your mind elsewhere? If so, gently reguide your awareness to your neck. PAUSE

Now shift your attention to your head, observing any sensations that arise. PAUSE

Notice if your mind has gotten off track and guide your attention back to your head. PAUSE

Shifting your attention now to your face, taking a moment to observe any sensations. PAUSE

If you're caught up in thought, refocus your attention on your face. PAUSE

Lastly, draw all of your attention to the very top of your head and slowly scan through your body until your attention returns to the soles of your feet.

When you feel ready to, take a slow, deep breath and gently open your eyes.

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4 Calming Visualisation

Picture yourself outside in a favourite place. Watch the clouds pass by in the sky.

Assign your emotions, thoughts and sensations to the clouds and just watch them float by.

I'm going to ask you to relax. In a moment, I am going to say some things that I hope will help you create a picture in your mind. I am also going to ask you to relax different parts of your body.

Learning to relax will help you cope with angry, sad, and scary feelings.

Find a comfortable position in your chair, or on the floor, not touching anyone and take a few deep relaxing breaths...

Close your eyes and relax...

Wiggle a little bit if you need too and make yourself comfortable.

Take a few more deep breaths...breathe in...and breathe out....breathe in...and breathe out....

Imagine a bright summer day. The sky is a beautiful shade of blue and the wind is lightly blowing.

Now, with your eyes closed, pretend that you are on a white fluffy cloud, high in the sky on a beautiful day. You are surrounded by other white fluffy clouds and you feel free and safe.

You are floating peacefully on that white fluffy cloud...moving very slowly...you are as light as a feather...and the fluffy cloud holds you safely...floating across the sky.

Now as I count from 1 to 3, imagine that you are sinking deeper and deeper into that cloud...so that cloud is all around you.

1...2...3..you are enjoying the ride on the cloud.

Now notice your toes and feet, how relaxed they feel. Notice your legs and all the muscles in your legs, light and relaxed on this cloud of yours. Notice your arms, your neck, notice your head,.....now you are totally relaxed....floating on this white fluffy cloud.

As your thoughts come you simply acknowledge them and let them float away....

Now we are getting ready to stop our ride on this cloud.

Remember that you can return to your very own cloud whenever you feel like you need to calm down and relax.

We will stop on the count of three...1....2.....3.

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Grounding

- 5 things that I can see
- 4 things that I can hear
- 3 things that I can smell
- 2 things that I can touch
- 1 thing that I can taste

What things could you do to practice “being in the Here and Now”?

Remind yourself of who you are now. Say your name. Say your age now. Say where you are now. Say what you have done today. Say what you will do next.

Splash some water on your face. Notice how it feels. Notice how the towel feels as you dry. Use words in your mind to describe the sensations.

Hold a cold can or bottle of soft drink in your hands. Feel the coldness, and the wetness on the outside. Note the bubbles and taste as you drink.

Turn your attention to the clothes on your body, whether your arms and legs are covered or not, and the sensation of your clothes as you move in them. Notice how your feet feel to be encased in shoes or socks, or resting on the floor.

If you are sitting, feel the chair under you and the weight of your body and legs pressing down onto it. Notice the pressure of the chair, or floor, or table against your body and limbs.

If you are lying down, feel the contact between your head, your body and your legs, as they touch the surface you are lying on. Starting from your head, notice how each part of your body feels, all the way down to your feet, on the soft or hard surface.

Stop and listen. Notice and name what sounds you can hear nearby. Start with the closest or loudest sounds. Gradually move your awareness of sounds outward, so you are focusing on what you can hear in the distance.

Get up and walk around. Take your time to notice each step you take one, then another.

The Hook Up

1. Put your arms straight out in front of you, palms facing out.
2. Put one hand over the other at the wrists and interlace your fingers.
3. Swoop your hands and arms toward your body and then place your interlaced hands on your chest.
4. Cross your feet at the ankles and put your tongue on the roof of your mouth.
5. Stay still for one minute.

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6 Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This relaxation technique reduces stress and anxiety in your body by having you slowly tense and then relax each muscle.

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Shut your eyes if you're comfortable doing so.

Begin by taking a deep breath and noticing the feeling of air filling your lungs. Hold your breath for a few seconds. (brief pause)

Release the breath slowly and let the tension leave your body. Take in another breath and hold it. (brief pause)

Again, slowly release the air.

Even slower now, take in another breath. Fill your lungs and hold the air. (brief pause)

Slowly release the breath and imagine the feeling of tension leaving your body.

Now, move your attention to your feet. Begin to tense your feet by curling your toes and the arch of each foot. Hold onto the tension and notice what it feels like. (5 second pause)

Release the tension in your feet. Notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Next, begin to focus on your lower legs. Tense the muscles in your calves. Hold them tightly and pay attention to the feeling of tension. (5 second pause)

Release the tension from your lower legs. Again, notice the feeling of relaxation. Remember to continue taking deep breaths.

Next, tense the muscles in your upper legs and pelvis. You can do this by tightly squeezing your thighs together. Make sure you feel tenseness without going to the point of strain, (5 second pause)

And release. Feel the tension leave your muscles.

Begin to tense your stomach and chest. You can do this by sucking your stomach in. Squeeze harder and hold the tension. A little bit longer. (5 second pause)

Release the tension. Allow your body to go limp. Let yourself notice the feeling of relaxation. Continue taking deep breaths. Breathe in slowly, noticing the air filling your lungs, and hold it. (brief pause)

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6 Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This relaxation technique reduces stress and anxiety in your body by having you slowly tense and then relax each muscle.

Release the air slowly. Feel it leaving your lungs.

Next, tense the muscles in your back by bringing your shoulders together behind you. Hold them tightly. Tense them as hard as you can without straining and keep holding. (5 second pause)

Release the tension from your back. Feel the tension slowly leaving your body, and the new feeling of relaxation. Notice how different your body feels when you allow it to relax.

Tense your arms all the way from your hands to your shoulders. Make a fist and squeeze all the way up your arm. Hold it. (5 second pause)

Release the tension from your arms and shoulders. Notice the feeling of relaxation in your fingers, hands, arms, and shoulders. Notice how your arms feel limp and at ease.

Move up to your neck and your head. Tense your face and your neck by squeezing the muscles around your eyes and mouth. (5 second pause)

Release the tension. Again, notice the new feeling of relaxation.

Finally, tense your entire body. Tense your feet, legs, stomach, chest, arms, neck and head. Tense harder, without straining. Hold the tension. (5 second pause)

Now release. Allow your whole body to go limp. Pay attention to the feeling of relaxation and how different it is from the feeling of tension.

Begin to wake your body up by slowly moving muscles, adjusting your arms and legs.

Stretch your muscles and open your eyes when you're ready.