THE COMFORT ABILITY

Belly Breathing Basics

This is the most basic "do-it –anytime-and anywhere" relaxation experience. Changing the way you breathe can make you feel relaxed, at ease, and more comfortable. Sometimes all it takes is 4-5 calming breaths to get back on track. But, breathing in this smooth, rhythmic way for several minutes at a time will give you the best results

First, we'll review the basic steps, and then we'll try it together.

Exhale all of your air as slowly as possible. Imagine that you are blowing your air through a straw and can only release a bit at a time. As you release your air, feel your body deflate. Shoulders drop. Neck relaxes. Joints and muscles become loose and comfortable. Continue to deflate until you've released all your air from your belly and chest. When all your air is released, notice that you can remain suspended in this quiet and peaceful state for a moment or two.

When you're ready, slowly inhale your next breath in through your nose, into your lungs and fills your belly with air. Your belly should inflate like a balloon as you breathe in. You may want to place a hand or favorite stuffed animal on your belly so you can be sure it's rising when you breathe in.

Keep your muscles calm and relaxed when you do this. Pay attention to how still you can become when your mind is calm and focused only on your breath.

Let's try this together. *Breathing in – 2, 3, 4, 5*. Pause for a moment. *Breathing out- 2, 3, 4, 5.* Nice job!

Remember to be patient with yourself. If you're not used to breathing in this way, it can take a few practices until you feel comfortable with this breathing method. But, once you get a smooth steady breath going, it should feel comfortable and relaxing to maintain this pattern of breathing.

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Here are some ways to keep your breathing practice interesting:

• Challenge yourself to increase the number of breaths you can comfortably do in a row. Can you reach 5 or 10 or 20 or 30 or more?

• Breathe one breath in and one breath out for each letter in your first, middle and last name. If you have a short name, try adding names of friends or siblings!

• Breathe one breath in and one breath out for each year you are old going up, and then one breath in and one breath out for each year counting back to 0.

• Set a timer on your phone on a stopwatch and try to increase your time. Set a goal of 2 minutes to start and see if you can work your way up to 5 or 10 minutes.