



Relaxation Breathing Exercises

Here are a few different tools to help you relax your breathing to reduce stress and anxiety:

1. Belly Breathing

- a. Put your hands on your stomach below your waist.
- b. Breathe from your belly, so that your hands move up and down as you breathe in and out
- c. Slow down your breathing, focus especially on taking longer to exhale
- d. Continue to do this for several minutes. If you get light-headed or dizzy, make sure you breathe in more.
- e. Fill and empty your lungs as completely as possible with each breath.

2. Floating Breath

- a. Close your eyes. Relax your whole body
- b. Breathe in and out slowly
- c. Allow your lungs to fill completely, empty them fully with each breath
- d. As your chest and stomach float up and down, imagine that you are floating on peaceful water.
- e. If it helps, place your hands on your chest or stomach and allow them to float up and down as you breathe in and out.

3. Counted Relaxation Breathing

- a. Put your tongue on the roof of your mouth, and keep it there as you do the following:
 - i. Breathe out to the count of eight.
 - ii. Breathe in to a count of four.
 - iii. Hold your breath to a count of seven.
 - iv. Repeat this cycle (8-4-7) four times.
 1. You can repeat this cycle as many times as you wish.
 2. You can do this anywhere, any time.
 3. This is a mind-body skill; it takes practice to become proficient at it. The more you do it, the better you will get at it, and the better results you will get.
 4. If you get dizzy or light-headed, you're not breathing in enough air; really pull it in fast and hard.
 5. Pace this according to how long you can hold your breath. You should do all the counting at the same speed.
 6. Putting your tongue on the roof of your mouth is like flipping a switch. There is a bundle of nerves that runs along the roof of the mouth, and according to Aruvedic Medicine, this completes the circuit of the central nervous system. It helps to activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which is the Relaxation Response, and de-escalate the sympathetic nervous system, which is the Fight-or-Flight Response.

When learning these skills, it is best to practice them several times a day, especially when you don't need them, so that when you do need them, you'll be able to do it more proficiently.

Brought to you courtesy of **Sharon M. Barnes, MSSW, LCSW**. She's **The Scrap Lady**: She helps **CASIGYs* Create Beauty & Benefit from Life's Scraps**. She offers **Classes, Counseling, PlayShops & Presentations** to help **CASIGYs thrive, heal and fulfill their destinies**. You'll find her at www.TherapistForSensitiveAndGifted.com

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