

Mini Relaxation Response Exercises “Minis”

Mini relaxation exercises are focused breathing techniques which help reduce anxiety and tension immediately!

Your breath is with you at every moment in time.

You can do the exercises with your eyes open or closed (but make sure that your eyes are open when you are driving!). You can do them any place, at any time; no one will know that you are doing them.



For all versions, be sure you are using belly breathing (diaphragmatic breathing):

- ✓ Breathe in through your nose and out through your nose or mouth.
- ✓ You should feel your stomach rising about an inch as you breathe in, and falling about an inch as you breathe out.
- ✓ If this is difficult for you, try laying on your back or stomach – you will be more aware of your breath.
- ✓ Remember, it is impossible to breath diaphragmatically if you are holding your stomach in! So ... relax your stomach muscles.

Good times to do a mini

- While stuck in traffic or at a red light
- When put on hold while on the phone
- When someone says something that bothers you
- When waiting for or during medical procedures or tests (e.g., mammograms, injections, in the dentist's chair)
- When you feel overwhelmed by your to do list
- While standing in line
- When in pain

Five “Mini” Relaxation Exercises

Mini Version 1: 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1

- Count very slowly to yourself from ten down to zero, one number for each out breath.
(So, with the first diaphragmatic breath, you say "ten" to yourself, with the next breath, you say "nine", etc.)
- If you start feeling light-headed or dizzy, slow the counting.
- When you get to "zero", see how you are feeling.
- If you are feeling better, great! If not, try doing it again.



Mini Version 2: Inhale 1-2-3-4 Exhale 4-3-2-1

- As you inhale, count very slowly up to four; as you exhale, count slowly back down to one. Do this several times (*for instance, as you inhale, you say to yourself "one, two, three, four," as you exhale, you say to yourself "four, three, two, one."*)

Mini Version 3: Inhale, Pause 1-2-3 Exhale, Pause 1-2-3

- After each inhalation, pause and count 1, 2, 3 (breath is held in)
- After you exhale, pause and count 1, 2, 3
- Do this for several breaths

Mini Version 4: Inhale “I Am” Exhale “At Peace”

- On the in breath, think “I Am”
- On the out breath, think “At Peace”

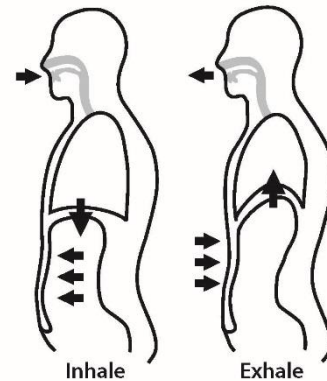
Mini Version 5: Physical sensation

These minis combine breath awareness with a physical focus.

- Self-massage your hand
- Stretch and yawn
- Sitting stretches/yoga poses (mountain, tree)
- Walk, counting four paces as you breathe in and four paces as you breathe out.
- Coordinate your breath with any other activity, for example: jogging, vacuuming, lifting weights, washing dishes, doing aerobics, biking, etc.

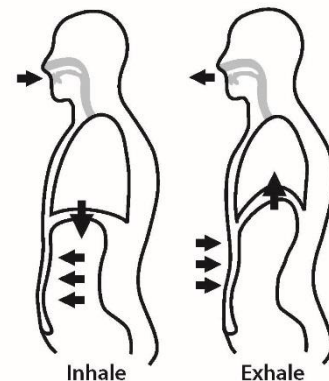
Belly Breathing (Diaphragmatic Breathing)

- Sit in a relaxed, comfortable position, with your
 - back straight
 - feet flat on the floor
 - hands flat in your lap
- Relax your shoulders, jaw and face
- Keep your shoulders back to allow your lungs to expand
- Relax your eyes. You can choose to:
 - close your eyes
 - keep your eyes open, with your head up and your eyes focused on the floor
- Gently place one hand on your belly (the part of your belly that is between the bottom of your ribcage and your belly button/navel).
- Take a deep breath in through your nose as you expand your belly. Let it expand like a balloon.
- Slowly let out the breath, pulling in your belly muscles and “deflating the balloon.” Press all the air out of your lungs.
- Continue breathing in and out as your belly rises and falls. Establish a natural rhythm.



Why Practice Belly Breathing? (Diaphragmatic Breathing)

- Breathing is the most basic function of human life.
- The more air we take into our lungs as we breath, the more relaxed we tend to be. This is how breath works in the body.
- In the same way, the state of the body, mind and emotions can be clearly seen in the breath pattern.
 - Have you ever noticed that when you are angry or upset, your breath becomes short and shallow?
 - Long, slow breaths, on the other hand, will relax and calm you.



Relaxation is a process of becoming calm and still. Deep breathing is an important part of learning to relax.

Some Benefits of Deep Breathing

- Releases tension
- Deepens relaxation
- Increases emotional control
- Increases clarity of mind
- Increases power of concentration
- Brings oxygen to cells
- Promotes general good health
- Helps with better sleep