Safeguarding
and Wellbeing

CONTROL YOUR ANXIETY

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BREATHING EXERCISES

Breathing issues affect many people living with anxiety. In some cases, anxiety can be brought on by poor breathing habits, but more commonly anxiety creates poor breathing habits by constantly stimulating the autonomic nervous system, ultimately changing the way you breath. When you have anxiety, you may find you suffer from any or all the following:

- Shallow breathing – in too quickly
- Monitored breathing – thinking about your breathing too much
- Over-breathing – breathing in more air because you feel you're not getting enough

Poor breathing habits can lead to a variety of issues, like hyperventilation. Hyperventilation is responsible for many of the symptoms of anxiety attacks, including chest pain and rapid heartbeat.

Healthy breathing can be calming to the mind and body. People use breathing exercises to both stop hyperventilation and calm themselves when they're feeling high amounts of anxiety.

With the right breathing techniques, you can reduce the extent of your anxiety and anxiety symptoms.

Breathing exercises take practice, so don't expect them to work straight away. The more practice, the better you'll get, and the easier a time you'll have calming yourself down during the anxiety attack or panic attack.

Co2 REBREATHING

What is it good for?

When you hyperventilate, it often feels as though you aren't getting enough oxygen. The reality is that you are getting too much oxygen, and your carbon dioxide levels are too low..

Try the following:

Cup your hands over your mouth and breathe slowly. You can also try using a small paper bag. The idea is to prevent the expulsion of carbon dioxide and get it back into your lungs so that you can regain the balance of Co2 in your system. Hold it over your face when you breathe and keep breathing as you would normally to regain your carbon dioxide levels.

Additional thoughts:

Research is mixed on the effectiveness of rebreathing in regaining your Co2 levels. It's hard to stop an anxiety attack, and rebreathing doesn't appear to stop one completely. But it may help reduce the severity of the symptoms, which should decrease the likelihood that the anxiety attack drains you of your energy or causes any emotional swings.

DEEP BREATHING FOR RELAXATION

What is it good for?

Deep breathing isn't always the best tool for an anxiety attack, but it is a good tool for high stress/high anxiety. Taking calm, deep breaths has a soothing effect on your body. It's not clear exactly why, but it's likely that controlled breathing combined with a few minutes away from your stressful situation gives you an opportunity to relax in a way that few people can do in the moment.

How it works:

There are different types of deep breathing strategies, but the simplest involves sitting in a chair with your back straight and your arms on the armrests. You take a deep, slow breath in through your nose lasting close to 5 to 6 seconds. You then hold for a few seconds, and breath out slowly through your mouth, taking close to 7 seconds (breathe out like you're whistling). Repeat 10 times.

Additional thoughts:

Deep breathing can be difficult at first and not very relaxing. It takes some practice. But once you've gotten used to it, it becomes much easier. You'll find that the deep breaths calm you the most by your 10th breath and show lower your blood pressure as well. As you improve, you can lengthen the number of breaths to 20.