

Anxiety & Breathing

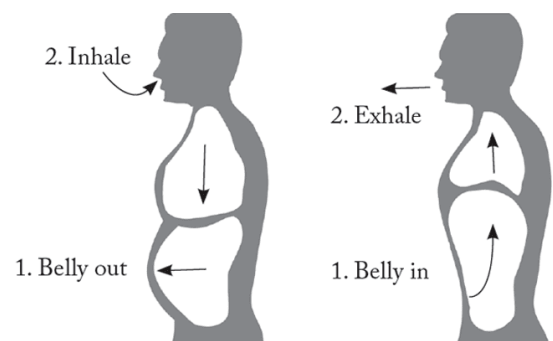
When we feel anxious or experience anxious thoughts our bodies go into a 'fight or flight' response. 'Fight or flight' is a physiological reaction that occurs when we perceive something as a threat. It represents the choices that our ancestors had when faced with danger in their environment. For example, when approached by a tiger, their bodies prepare them to either fight or flee. In either case, the physiological and psychological response to stress prepares the body to react to the danger. Today, our brains have developed so much that the same physiological response occurs when we experience a worrying thought.



Adrenalin is released into the body that prepares the body to either stay and deal with a perceived threat or to run away to safety. This results in an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, breathing rate and a number of other physical symptoms. After the threat is gone, it takes between 20 to 60 minutes for the body to return to its pre-arousal levels. To calm the body and to exit the 'fight or flight' response we can use the breathing techniques below.

Abdominal Breathing

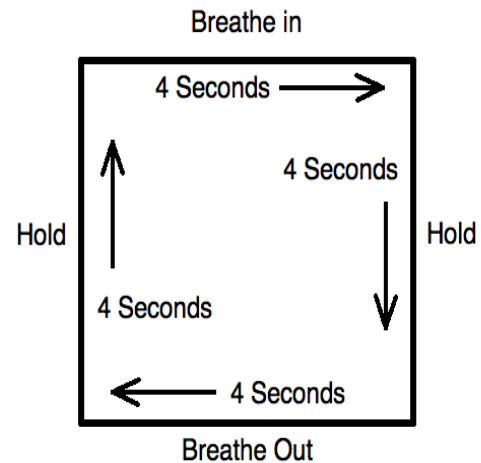
1. Sit/lay in a comfortable position
2. Put one hand on stomach
3. Breathe in slowly through your nose, feeling your stomach expand.
4. Exhale through your mouth, feeling your stomach fall.
5. Repeat for a total of 5 to 10 minutes *



*For chronic anxiety (i.e. experiencing feeling anxious on a daily basis) try and practice this technique 2 to 4 times a day for maximum benefits.

Square Breathing

1. Breathe in through your nose for 4 seconds
2. Hold your breathe for 4 seconds
3. Exhale through your mouth for 4 seconds
4. Pause for 4 seconds
5. Repeat for a total of 3 minutes or until you feel calmer



4-6-8 Breathing

1. Sit or lay in a comfortable position and place the tip of your tongue just behind your upper front teeth and keep it there
2. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose for 4 seconds
3. Hold your breathe for 6 seconds
4. Exhale completely through your mouth (letting go of your tongue), making a whoosh sound for 8 seconds.
5. Repeat for 4 cycles

Alternate Nostril Breathing

1. Sit comfortably
2. Using the right thumb, softly close the right nostril, and inhale as slowly as you can through the left nostril, then close it with your right finger. Hold your breathe for a second.
3. Open and exhale slowly through the right nostril.
4. With the right nostril open, inhale slowly, then close it with the thumb. Pause.
5. Repeat for 5-10 cycles.

