

Breath Relaxation Method

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General instructions:

- Practice this 2-3 times per day until it becomes easy to do.
- Spend 5-10 minutes in each practice session.
- Use just Step 1 – Breath Control, if doing other things at the same time.
- If you have mastered steps 1-3, use just Step 3 – Relaxation Key, for quick access to your relaxed state.
- Omit step 4 – Non-reaction Meditation, if time is limited.
- Step 4 is aimed at more long term peace of mind so is well worth the effort.

Step 1. Breath Control – puts you back in control of your panicky reactions.

- Start by just noticing / observing the breathing pattern currently happening.
- Gradually extend the length of both the *in breath* and the *out breath* without over breathing or hyperventilating, so the breath is long and slow. Aim for about 4-6 breaths per minute. If you take in too much oxygen your fingers will tingle so slow down the amount you take in and lengthen the time you take to let it out. If you take in too little oxygen your heart starts pounding, so increase your rate of breathing until your heart beats normally.
- Breathe consciously and connectedly, not pausing or holding the breath at any point. This is very smooth, regular and calm breathing.

Step 2. “Sinking on the out breath” – induces physical relaxation response.

- Keep Step 1 – Breath Control, going throughout this step.
- After getting the rhythm going in Step 1, imagine yourself sinking deeper into the chair or couch as your chest falls with each breath.
- Do this until you feel your muscles let go, or about 1-2 minutes.

Step 3. “Sloooooooooow Dooooooooooooown” – creates a verbal key to quickly relax.

- Keep Breath Control, going throughout this step. Stop focusing on sinking.
- Silently say, “Sloooooooooow Dooooooooooooown” through the whole out breath.
- Do this for 1-2 minutes or until you feel slowed down.

Step 4. Non-reaction Meditation – quiets your mind, breaks the reactive thought cycle.

- Stop steps 1-3, letting your breathing return to a slow relaxed normal breath.
- Quietly observe the thoughts arising in you mind.
- Practice not reacting to the content of the thought or to the fact that the thought arose, by holding in awareness, the idea that it is just a thought, just an electrical mental event that requires no action or reaction. Just let the thought float past, do not hold on to the thought or think about the thought. Just notice it and let it go. Any action on any thought can wait until a later time. There is nothing you need to do about any thought at the moment, especially worry or anxious thoughts.
- Slowly the thought storm will calm down and more importantly you will have detached yourself from over reacting to thoughts. This will help break the worry cycle and stop giving anxiety producing thoughts any power.
- Practice this for several minutes or up to 10 minutes at a session.