

UNSTRUCTURED BREATHING TECHNIQUES

REMEMBERING TO BREATHE.

When we become stressed, we often tense up our bodies and hold our breath, without even realizing it. Telling yourself gently, to “Breathe” or “Take a breath,” can help you to recapture your normal breathing pattern. When you remind yourself to breathe, you may naturally take a deeper breath than usual, and bring much needed oxygen back into your body, releasing any anxiety you are holding.



FOLLOWING THE BREATH.

Sit comfortably, close your eyes (optional), and simply pay attention to your breathing. You don't need to try to change your breathing pattern; just pay attention to it. Follow your breath enters your body, where it moves through your body, and where it moves out. Notice if your chest moves as your lungs expand and contract. Notice if your shoulders rise or fall.



Notice if your breath moves all the way down into your abdomen when you inhale, or only into your mouth or throat. Try to reserve all judgmental thoughts as you follow your breath and simply observe. Your mind will naturally wander to other thoughts during this exercise. When this happens, simply notice it and then gently bring your attention back to your breath again.

As you become comfortable with this exercise and continue to focus on your breath, it will naturally begin to deepen, and your heart rate will slow down. The deeper and slower your breath becomes, the more relaxed your body will feel. Start with a goal of two or three minutes, and then continue to follow your breath for as long as you are comfortable. Even one minute of focused breathing can help you to reclaim your sense of peace. If you are feeling tense sitting in a traffic jam, standing in a long line at the store, or right before you have to speak at a meeting, you can take your mind off of the tension and its cause by paying attention to your breath. This can change anxiety to peace in your mind and body.