

# Deep Breathing

A simple, powerful technique for calming anxiety and stress

Deep breathing is a relaxation technique performed by purposefully taking slow, deep breaths. When practiced regularly, it provides both immediate and long-term relief from stress and anxiety.

## How Deep Breathing Works

During anxiety, your body triggers the stress response: breathing becomes shallow and rapid, heart rate increases, and muscles tense. The opposite is the relaxation response: breathing slows and deepens, and symptoms fade. Deep breathing activates this response — giving you a direct, physical tool to calm your nervous system.

## Instructions

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes if you'd like. When learning, try placing a hand on your stomach — if you breathe deeply enough, you should notice it rising and falling with each breath.

1

**INHALE** (4 sec)

Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 seconds.

2

**PAUSE** (4 sec)

Hold the air in your lungs for 4 seconds.

3

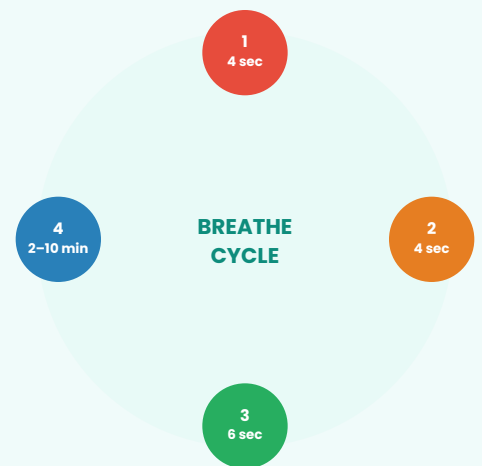
**EXHALE** (6 sec)

Breathe out slowly through your mouth for 6 seconds. Tip: Pucker your lips as if blowing through a straw to slow your exhalation.

4

**REPEAT** (2–10 min)

Practice for at least 2 minutes, but preferably 5 to 10 minutes.



## Tips for Success

If it isn't working, slow down! The most common mistake is breathing too fast. Time each step in your head, counting slowly.

Counting your breaths serves a second purpose — it takes your mind off the source of anxiety. Whenever your mind wanders, gently return your focus to counting.

The times given for each step are suggestions. Lengthen the time if it feels natural, or shorten it if you feel discomfort. There's no perfect way — just your way.

## Reaching Out for Professional Support

Deep breathing is a wonderful tool, but it's just one piece of the puzzle. If anxiety, stress, or panic are significantly affecting your daily life, speaking with a therapist or counsellor can make a real difference. They can work with you on a personalised approach — including breathing techniques, cognitive strategies, and more. Reaching out is one of the bravest things you can do for yourself.