



Diaphragmatic Breathing for Relaxation

Breathing correctly will help you to reduce anxiety and allow your body and mind to become more relaxed. When we feel anxious or stressed our breathing becomes more shallow, causing an imbalance of oxygen and carbon dioxide, which can exacerbate the symptoms of anxiety.

Diaphragmatic breathing is a relaxed breathing technique by breathing down into your abdomen. Your stomach will gently move up and down as you breathe in and out this way, with little or no movement from the chest area. Placing one hand on your chest and one on your stomach will help you become aware of how you are breathing.

Breathe in through your nose and maintain a relaxed rhythm by ratio breathing (in to the count of 3, and out to the count of 5, or 5 and 7) whatever feels comfortable for you, so as the out-breath is longer than the in-breath. You may like to imagine the numbers in your mind as you count, helping to distract you from anxious thoughts and keep your attention on your breathing and becoming relaxed.

Initially, it can be helpful to practice this technique, in a quiet, relaxed place where you won't be disturbed, for about 10-15 minutes, then use it whenever you need to.

Taking several breaths this way when you are feeling anxious or stressed will relax you and reduce your level of anxiety.