

Breathe

FACILITATOR HANDOUT

Breathing is fundamental; we can go without food or water for a while, but we can only go without breathing for a few minutes. It's also one of the things that is impacted by changes in emotional states. We often notice our breathing or heart rate changes before we even realise we are having an emotional reaction to something – it can be one of our first warning signs!

Breathing is the most effective way to help us stay calm and focused. Snipers in the army are taught breathing techniques to help them stay calm and focused while working. Breathing techniques are not just for those that are spiritual or hippies! They can help everyone. It is also a great skill to master as you don't need any equipment, no-one can tell you are using the strategy and you can practise it anywhere!

By practising calm, deep breaths, we can let go of any unpleasant emotions and focus on the here and now.



Activity - we're going to practise a great breathing technique together

Lie down with your back on a flat surface

Put the tips of your middle fingers so they are just touching, with your palms flat against your stomach. The tips of your middle fingers should be sat over your belly button (if students struggle with this, they can lay an item on their stomach, such as their mobile phone)

You are going to take a deep breath in through your nose

Imagine air going in through your nose, down into your lungs and into your stomach

Imagine your stomach is a balloon and you are inflating it with the air you are breathing in

As you do this, your stomach should 'inflate' and rise and you should see that the tips of your fingers are now not touching (or notice the rise and fall of the item placed on the stomach)

Once you have 'inflated your balloon', breathe out through your mouth

Repeat until you feel calm

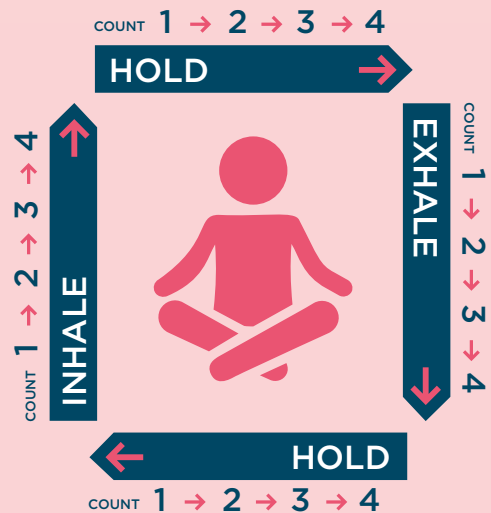
If you notice your attention wander, no problem, just refocus on your breathing



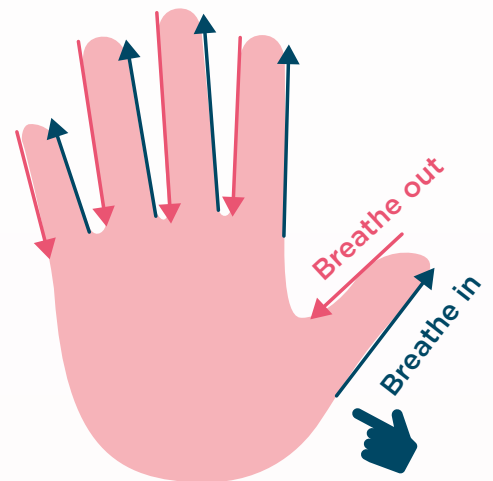
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Here are some other breathing techniques you may find useful....

Square breathing - imagine you are drawing out a square. You will be holding your breath on the horizontals and breathing out on the verticals. Follow the diagram opposite:



5 finger breathing - similar to square breathing above, you follow the shape of your hand, inhaling on the upwards and exhaling on the downwards as you trace your fingers. Follow the diagram opposite:



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