



Relaxation Techniques

Abdominal breathing

When people are stressed or anxious, they usually take shallow, quick breaths that can lead to uncomfortable and sometimes scary physical responses. Abdominal breathing is the opposite of this; it involves slow, deep breaths all the way down into your abdomen and then exhaling completely. This triggers a relaxation response.

Abdominal breathing is a handy skill to learn because you can use it anywhere without others noticing. It's useful to learn this skill before the other relaxation exercises because most of them include abdominal breathing.

When you have mastered this technique, you can use it when you feel tense or worried or when you are about to face a difficult or challenging situation.

Mindfulness:

Mindfulness is an ancient practice found in Eastern philosophies, including Buddhism. Mindfulness involves bringing attention or awareness to the present moment in a non-judgemental manner.

Being mindful is about just noticing and observing, without trying to change anything or to stop or prolong the experience in any way. It can be applied to any situation.

The practice of mindfulness is to notice that your mind has wandered and then redirect your attention back to the present moment.

Suggestions for mindfulness activity

- Notice your breath: Slowly breathe in and out; notice how the air feels in your nostrils as you breathe in. Notice the time it takes between inhaling and exhaling and how it feels to breathe out through your mouth. Remember that becoming distracted is normal; if this happens, just notice the thought passing through your mind, and redirect your attention to your breath.
- Try to practice mindfulness for at least 5 minutes, once a day.

Affirmations:

These are positive statements that you say to yourself to replace negative thoughts or worries. Examples of affirmations are:

- "I accept the natural ups and downs of life."
- "It's never too late to change. I am improving one step at a time."
- "I love and accept myself the way I am."

In order for affirmations to help, you have to practise. Choose one or two affirmations and repeat them to yourself over and over when you are feeling relaxed.

When you practise your affirmation, start by saying it out loud and with confidence, even if you don't believe what you are saying. Practising will help you use this strategy automatically when you're feeling anxious or notice your negative thoughts.



Inner Balance Hypnotherapy

Colour Breathing

Imagine your worry having a colour – perhaps a dark, murky colour. Take a big deep breath in your nostrils and slowly let the air out of your mouth – imagining that, as you do, the “worry colour” is coming out with it. Do this a couple of times until you feel that most of the “worry colour” had been expelled from your body.

Now, think of a calming colour, perhaps a light colour, and the next time you take a breath into your nostrils, imagine inhaling that colour along with it. Imagine that calming colour spreading throughout your body, helping to push out any remaining “worry colour” that is still inside of you. Do this a couple of times until you only feel the calming colour flowing within you.