

Learning Calm Controlled breathing

Useful information about how our bodies work

At times when we feel tense it can affect both our minds and bodies. When our minds race it can trigger the fight or flight adrenaline response. This prepares our bodies for either fight or flight in the face of threat. This threat is often something outside us - like a dog chasing us, or a car hooting loudly as it almost runs into us as we cross the road. We can notice a surge of adrenaline- causing our hearts to speed up, and our breathing becomes faster. The benefit to us is it primes our bodies to react quickly to escape the danger. Adrenaline is released and surges through our system. The rapid heart and breathing makes sure that blood high in oxygen gets to our muscles so they are powered and ready to react.

When this **fight or flight adrenaline response** occurs at times of threat it can be lifesaving. However, often at times of anxiety the same response can be triggered when there is no real threat, and instead it is also caused by anxious thoughts or panic. When you panic or feel tense, you breathe too fast. It's called **hyperventilation** and it makes any dry mouth, blurry eyes and dizziness worse. It's also making you feel faint and it may be giving you a tight feeling in your chest. Some people notice pins and needles as well.

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How to breathe in a calm, controlled way

Using the big numbers at the side, do this:

1. Close your mouth and drop your shoulders, then...
2. Through your nose, breathe in a normal sized breath while slowly counting one... two...three to yourself. Take about a second for each number.
3. Now breathe out again, still through your nose, counting one...two...three.

Breathe like this for at least two minutes and you'll find your dry mouth and dizziness start to fade away.

Your heart rate will start to calm down as well.

The key is calm breathing. You don't need to, but if you want then imagine a lovely, calming scene like the one below.

