Breathing Exercises to Reduce Stress

Focus on ME — Mental Health is Essential Health

Try these simple breathing exercises and grounding techniques to help you feel calmer when you are feeling stressed.

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 Grounding Technique

Close your eyes and focus on breathing.

5 Open your eyes. **What are 5 things you can see?** It could be the sky, the pattern on the wall, the way the light shines on the table, or 5 objects in the room.

4 **What are 4 things you can feel?** How does your T-shirt feel, does the sun feel warm on your skin, feel the chair underneath you, or pick up an object and notice how it feels in your hand.

3 **What 3 things can you hear?** Can you hear a ticking clock, or the traffic far away? Can you hear your breathing, or a radio on in another room?

2 **What 2 things can you smell?** Can you smell fresh grass, or a new air freshener in the room? Can you find something in the room that may smell nice, some flowers or a candle maybe?

1 **What is 1 thing you can taste?** Perhaps you are chewing gum, or have a sweet in your pocket? What does it taste like as you chew?



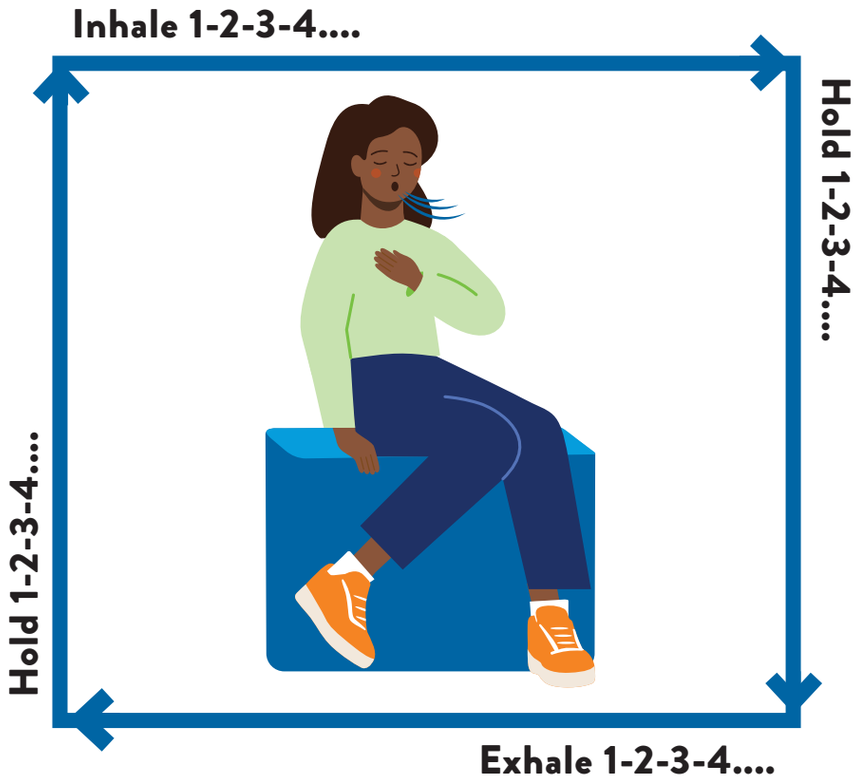
Close your eyes again and focus on your breathing. Then shift your attention onto something different.

Source: Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust

Box Breathing

Sit in a chair with your back straight or lie down in a comfortable position. In your mind, try to picture the four sides of a box as you do this exercise.

Focus on counting and the feeling of your breath. Take a deep breath in through your nose for 4 counts. (Your counts do not need to be counted in seconds. You can count slower or faster, depending on what feels right for you). Hold your breath for 4 counts, then slowly let your breath out through your mouth for 4 counts.



Source: The Ohio State University Comprehensive Cancer Center – Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital and Richard J. Solove Research Institute

Focus on ME is a quality improvement project working with primary care providers across Ohio to improve care for depression and anxiety in women of reproductive age.

Department of Medicaid
Department of Children & Youth

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