Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Sit back or lie down in a comfortable position. Shut your eyes if you're comfortable doing so. During this exercise pay special attention to the feeling of releasing tension in each muscle and the resulting feeling of relaxation. The idea of this technique it to intentionally tense each muscle, and then to release the tension. Let's practise with your feet…

1. Tense the muscles in your toes by curling them into your foot. Notice how it feels when your foot is tense. Hold the tension for 5 seconds.
2. Release the tension from your toes. Let them relax. Notice how your feet feel differently after you release the tension.
3. Tense the muscles all throughout your calf. Hold it for 5 seconds. Notice how the feeling of the tension in your leg feels.
4. Release the tension from your calf, and notice how the feeling of relaxation differs.

Follow this pattern of tensing and releasing tension all throughout your body. After you finish with your feet and legs, move up through your torso, arms, hands, neck and head.

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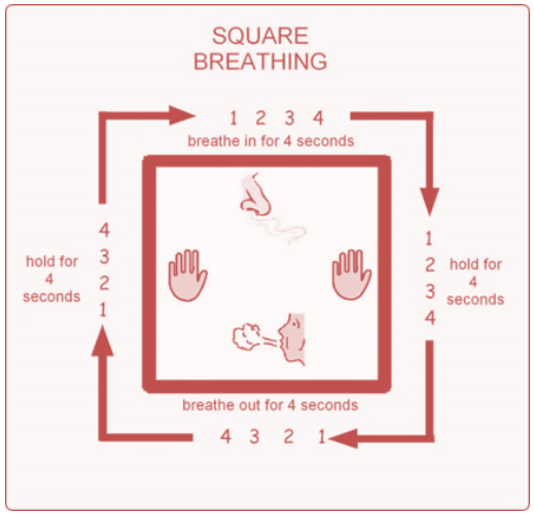
Relaxation and Mindfulness

Square Breathing



Step 1: Starting at the bottom right hand corner of the square, sit upright and slowly exhale through your mouth for a slow count of four. Pay attention to the feeling of the air leaving your lungs.

Step 2: Hold your breath for another slow count of four.

Step 3: Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose to the count of four. In this step, count to four very slowly in your head. Feel the air fill your lungs, one section at a time, until your lungs are completely full and the air moves into your abdomen.

Step 4: Hold your breath for the same slow count of four before repeating this process.

Self-Sooth Box

A self-sooth box is a useful tool to use when you are feeling a variety of emotions including sadness, anxiety and worry. It is personal to each individual and can be kept throughout their life and continuously updated. Here are some ideas of what to include in this box.

A few ideas of what you could include...

- **Sensory Items;** e.g. fidget cubes/spinners or stress balls. These items can help restlessness.
- **Bubbles;** These help to support relaxation and help regulate your breathing.
- **Photos;** of loved ones/pets etc. These can help to remind you of your close relationships and who is around to support you.
- **Notes;** either from yourself or people in your support network. These can help provide reassurance and place things into perspective.
- **Hobby items;** e.g. music, colouring, books. These can help to relax and distract you.
- **Relaxation;** breathing and other relaxation techniques, that you may have found useful; some prompt cards of how to complete these may be useful when in a state of anxiety or worry.

ANYTHING THAT IS MEANINGFUL TO YOU, OR YOU KNOW WILL BE HELPFUL!

We recommend sourcing a shoe box and taking time to decorate this how you like, to ensure it's personal to you. It is important to decorate this with things that will improve your mood. Collect together items that are meaningful to you, or you know will be helpful (e.g. Apps, websites and important numbers). Make sure to keep it somewhere you can easily access it.

Colour Breathing

⇒ Make sure you are sitting comfortably

⇒ Bring your attention to your breathing

⇒ Notice how your abdomen rises on the in breath and falls and deflates on the outbreath.

⇒ Now visualise your colour either in the form of a light or a mist. See it in front of your around you and enveloping you. As your breath becomes aware of your colour; imagine the colour spreading throughout your body and notice the effects it has.

⇒ Notice the sensations in your body as this coloured mist spreads through your body and mind.

⇒ Anytime your attention wanders just simply bring it back to your breathing and your colour.

⇒ When you are ready open your eyes and bring you attention back to the here and now; noticing what you see, hear and feel.

Grounding

When your mind wanders to negative thoughts and worries, bring yourself back to the present. Accept that you are having bad thoughts, try to challenge them and then concentrate on other things. You can do this by distracting yourself. One way to do this is to focus on your senses … can you name five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can feel, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste?

Other things you could try…

⇒ Try doing some exercise; go for a walk, do a home workout or walk your dog.

⇒ Try doodling or scribbling on paper.

⇒ Listen to music.

⇒ Write in a journal or write a letter.

⇒ Have a relaxing bath.

⇒ Watch your favourite movie or TV show.

⇒ Try cooking or baking.