

CALMING TOOLBOX

Calming Tool: Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic breathing, aka, belly breathing is a manner of breathing that calms the body. It is the breathing that we engage in when we are sleeping or in a calm state.

Shallow or quick breathing triggers our anxiety center. So, slow, calming breaths sends the message that we can be calm.

How to belly breathe:

- 1) Breathe in as if you are smelling the most beautiful flowers or best food in the world
- 2) Breathe out as fast as you would breathe on hot soup.

Try now to do belly breaths 5 times, noticing your abdomen expanding and contracting with each breath.

Calming Tool: Using the Body

Using our body to help us calm can be very powerful:

- Our anxiety system wants to contract muscles in preparation for fight or flight, elongating or expanding our muscles cue our body to be in a more relaxed state.
- Elongating / expanding our muscles connects us to our smart brain as have to consciously think about how to stretch.
- Using the body can also connect us to calmer breathing which is another calming skill in itself.

Some Methods to Use:

- Stretching
- Yoga
- Exercise: Running
- Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Keys to Effective Use of the Body

- Take time to elongate the muscles that you typically notice contract when your anxious
- Focus on the body movements themselves
- Slow down each movement and stretch, giving time to fully let the muscles expand and relax

What areas of the body/muscle groups do you notice tighten when you are anxious:

Have you identified ways to stretch the areas that contract when you are anxious? oYes oNo

Which methods have you tried to use with the body to calm yourself down? Circle all that have been helpful.

Stretching Yoga Exercise: _____

Progressive Muscle Relaxation Others: _____

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

Progressive muscle relaxation is another method to calm the body. It is the process of tightening and then releasing muscle groups. As you move through this technique, take note of the difference between tense muscles and relaxed muscles. Read each set of directions slowly, using a calming tone in your voice. It is important not to rush through these.

1. Let's begin by taking around ten nice, even diaphragmatic breaths at your own pace. Let your stomach fill with air like a balloon when you inhale, then feel it deflate as you exhale.
2. Next, we will begin to relax the muscles in your body. Pretend that you have a lemon in your right hand and squeeze as hard as you can. (Hold and squeeze for about five seconds). Pay attention to the tension in your muscles. Now, drop the lemon and let your muscles relax. (Repeat for the left arm).
3. Now, stretch your arms high above your head and back as far as you can without hurting yourself. Now, let your arms drop. Do not try to stop them. Just let them fall. Now, reach for the ceiling. Stretch higher. Go as high as you can. Then pull back. (Hold for three to five seconds.) Now let your arms drop to your side.
4. Now, let's work on your jaw muscles. We are going to pretend that you have a hard piece of candy in your mouth, and you are going to try to bite through it. Really clamp down, squeeze your jaw shut, and then hold it. Now, relax your jaw muscles. Let's try it again. (Repeat). Now, relax and feel the tension melt away in your entire body.
5. We are going to work on the face and nose now. Scrunch up your nose as tight as you can, making lots of wrinkles in your face. Now relax. Let's try it again. Scrunch harder. Now relax and notice how your face feels.
6. We are moving to your stomach now. For this exercise, you are going to squeeze your stomach muscles as hard as you can. Squeeze, squeeze, squeeze. You can relax now. Now squeeze those muscles again. Hold it for five seconds. Relax. Try it one more time squeezing as hard as you can for a count of five. Now relax your entire body and notice how it feels.
7. Now, pretend you are on a sandy beach. Squeeze your toes into the sand. Feel the wet sand squish between your toes, using the muscles in your legs to squeeze your toes into the sand as hard as you can. Relax the muscles in your legs. Feel the tension wash away into the ocean. Let's try it again, only this time, dig deeper into the sand, using your legs once again to help you grip with your toes. Relax your legs and relax your entire body.
8. Last, pretend you are a rag doll, and let your entire body go limp. Notice how good it feels to be relaxed. Now, just enjoy the feeling and combine it with some diaphragmatic breath (allow one to three minutes of breathing time).

Calming Tool: Visualization

Visualization is a very helpful technique for anxiety as it:

- Serves as a powerful calming tool as it connects you to a more peaceful / relaxed state
- Engages other parts of the mind to help calm down the anxiety center
- Can also be used to rehearse and practice working through anxious situations
- When rehearsed multiple times, it can be used quickly and have quick impact

Some Examples of Visualizations

- Guided visualizations transform you to a peaceful location and usually engage all your senses.
 - Numerous guided visualizations can be found on-line or scripts can be downloaded to listen
- Personal visualizations can take you to calm or happy places from your own life
 - Picture yourself there and let yourself engage with each sense along the journey (touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing)
- Rehearsing an upcoming event or routine with such clarity that you can picture each aspect, in your visualization you can practice working through difficult moments and being successful

Keys to Effective Visualization

- Visualizing with enough clarity and detail that you can truly see yourself in the setting
- Engage all your senses in each visualization
- Practice, practice, practice and then practice some more

Happy Place Visualization

Remember or think about a place in your life where you were truly happy. This is going to be your happy/calm place. Go there now, picturing all aspects of the place. See the colors of the place with new vibrance, the amazing smells, and the happy sounds.

Now, spend some time here, letting yourself truly picture your happy place, walk around and notice new details of the environment with clarity. Amazingly, each time you go back there, you will find how this brings a smile to your face and you find yourself more and more relaxed.

You will also find how quickly you can transport yourself to your happy place, and achieve a calm outlook to do the work of the anxiety.

Beach Visualization

Get comfortable. Sit in a supportive chair or lie on your back. Relax your body by releasing any areas of tension. Allow your arms to go limp... then your legs.... Feel your arms and legs becoming loose and relaxed...

Now relax your neck and back by relaxing your spine.... release the hold of your muscles all the way from your head, down your neck....along each vertebra to the tip of your spine...Breathe deeply into your diaphragm, drawing air fully into your lungs.... and release the air with a whooshing sound....Breathe in again, slowly.... pause for a moment.... and breathe out.....Draw a deep breath in.... and out....In..... out.....Become more and more relaxed with each breath....

Feel your body giving up all the tension.... becoming relaxed.... and calm.... peaceful....Feel a wave of relaxation flow from the soles of your feet, to your ankles, lower legs, hips, pelvic area, abdomen, chest, back, hands, lower arms, elbows, upper arms, shoulders, neck, back of your head, face, and the top of your head....Allow your entire body to rest heavily on the surface where you sit or lie. Now that your body is fully relaxed, allow the visualization relaxation to begin.

Imagine you are walking toward the ocean.... walking through a beautiful, tropical forest....You can hear the waves up ahead.... you can smell the ocean spray.... the air is moist and warm.... feel a pleasant, cool breeze blowing through the trees....

You walk along a path....coming closer to the sea....as you come to the edge of the trees, you see the brilliant aqua color of the ocean ahead....

You walk out of the forest and onto a long stretch of white sand.... the sand is very soft powder.... imagine taking off your shoes, and walking through the hot, white sand toward the water....

The beach is wide and long... Hear the waves crashing to the shore....

Smell the clean salt water and beach....You gaze again toward the water.... it is a bright blue-green....

See the waves washing up onto the sand..... and receding back toward the ocean.... washing up.... and flowing back down..... enjoy the ever-repeating rhythm of the waves...Imagine yourself walking toward the water.... over the fine, hot sand.... you are feeling very hot....

As you approach the water, you can feel the mist from the ocean on your skin. You walk closer to the waves, and feel the sand becoming wet and firm....A wave washes over the sand toward you.... and touches your toes before receding...

As you step forward, more waves wash over your feet... feel the cool water provide relief from the heat....

Walk further into the clear, clean water.... you can see the white sand under the water.... the water is a pleasant, relaxing temperature.... providing relief from the hot sun... cool but not cold... You walk further into the water if you wish.... swim if you want to.... enjoy the ocean for a few minutes..... allow the visualization relaxation to deepen.... more and more relaxed... enjoy the ocean....

Now you are feeling calm and refreshed...You walk back out of the water and onto the beach...

Stroll along the beach at the water's edge.... free of worries... no stress... calm..... enjoying this holiday....

Up ahead is a comfortable lounge chair and towel, just for you... Sit or lie down in the chair, or spread the towel on the sand.... relax on the chair or towel.... enjoying the sun.... the breeze.... the waves.... You feel peaceful and relaxed.... allow all your stresses to melt away.... When you are ready to return from your vacation, do so slowly....

Bring yourself back to your usual level of alertness and awareness....Keep with you the feeling of calm and relaxation.... feeling ready to return to your day....Open your eyes, stretch your muscles... and become fully alert... refreshed... and filled with energy.

You can practice this visualization relaxation as often as you wish, to provide a mental vacation whenever you need it. Visualization relaxation is a skill that can be learned; the more you practice, the more skilled you will become and more effectively you will be able to relax using visualization relaxation

Taken From: <http://www.innerhealthstudio.com/visualization-relaxation.html>

Calming Tool: Release

Releasing built up emotions is a very helpful calming tool as it:

- Takes some of the emotional energy/fuel out of our feelings
- Can help us get perspective and see things in a new way when we see it on paper or talk through it with someone
- Can help us gain some control over what seemed overwhelming and unwieldy

Some Methods to Release

- **Journal:** write out your feelings and emotions, focusing on what is upsetting you or bothering you
- **Sharing/venting:** share with another person who can be a good listener and help support the release of the feelings

Keys to Effective Release

- Use the time to release your feelings and what upsets you, don't avoid
- Tap into your feelings about the events, not just a description of the events
- Push into the deeper layers, move away from the surface
- Know that in the beginning releasing can be overwhelming, push through for the healing to come
- Don't use release right before bed as it is an activating activity

Journaling Techniques:

- 1) **Data Dump:** Just let out all your thoughts and feelings in no particular order, push through the initial layers of thoughts and continue to go deeper
- 2) **Feeling Dump:** Reflect and journal on these 3 questions
 - a. What am I feeling?
 - b. Why does that feeling make sense?
 - c. What are the healthy choices around my feelings?

3) **Category Dump:** Combine the feeling aspect from #2 yet focus on areas of your life including:

- Family
- Social
- Job/career
- Self (physical/emotional health/identity),
- Interests
- Academics / learning
- Other (things that don't neatly fit in)

Release Practice: On a separate piece of paper, take 10 minutes and try it out! Remember, music is a great addition to this process.

Calming Tool: Mindfulness

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness means maintaining a moment-by-moment awareness of our thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and surrounding environment.

Mindfulness also involves acceptance, meaning that we pay attention to our thoughts and feelings without judging them—without believing, for instance, that there’s a “right” or “wrong” way to think or feel in a given moment. When we practice mindfulness, our thoughts tune into what we’re sensing in the present moment rather than rehashing the past or imagining the future.

How To Cultivate Mindfulness?

Key components of practicing mindfulness that Kabat-Zinn and others identify:

- Pay close attention to your breathing, especially when you’re feeling intense emotions.
- Notice—really notice—what you’re sensing in a given moment, the sights, sounds, and smells that ordinarily slip by without reaching your conscious awareness.
- Recognize that your thoughts and emotions are fleeting and do not define you, an insight that can free you from negative thought patterns.
- Tune into your body’s physical sensations, from the water hitting your skin in the shower to the way your body rests in your office chair.

Mindfulness is a skill and to be able to use it well it needs to be practiced. Mindfulness can be practiced and achieved through various formats including: meditations or scripts, eating practices and scripts, walking, and music listening.

Adapted from: <http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/mindfulness/definition>

Mindful Meditation Mountain Meditation

Sit with a straight back, your head held erect on your neck and shoulders, allow the shoulders to fully relax. And place your hands on your knees.

Close your eyes and bring your attention to the flow of your breathing. Feeling each in breath and each outbreath. Just observing your breathing without trying to change it or regulate it in any way. Allowing the body to be still. And sitting with a sense of dignity, a sense of resolve, a sense of being complete, whole, in this very moment, with your posture reflecting this sense of wholeness.

And as you sit here, picturing in your mind’s eye as best you can the most beautiful mountain that you know or have seen or can imagine. Just holding the image and feeling of this mountain in your mind’s

eye, letting it gradually come into greater focus. Observing its overall shape, its lofty peak high in the sky, the large base rooted in the rock of the earth's crust, its steep or gently sloping sides. Noticing how massive it is, how solid, how unmoving, how beautiful both from afar and up close. Perhaps your mountain has snow at the top and trees on the lower slopes. Perhaps it has one prominent peak, perhaps a series of peaks or a high plateau. Whatever its shape or appearance, just sitting and breathing with the image of this mountain. Observing it, noticing its qualities and when you feel ready, seeing if you can bring the mountain into your own body so that the body sitting here and the mountain in your mind's eye become one. So that as you sit here you share in the massiveness and the stillness and majesty of the mountain. You become the mountain rooted in the sitting posture, your head becomes the lofty peak, supported by the rest of the body. Your shoulders and arms the sides of the mountain. Your buttocks and legs the solid base rooted to your chair. Experiencing in your body a sense of uplift from deep within your pelvis and spine, with each breath as you continue sitting, becoming a little more a breathing mountain, unwavering in your stillness, completely what you are, beyond words and thought. A centred, rooted, unmoving presence.

Now as you sit here becoming aware of the fact that as the sun travels across the sky, the light and shadows and colors are changing virtually moment by moment. Night follows day and day follows night. A canopy of stars, the moon, then the sun. Through it all, the mountain just sits, experiencing change in each moment. Constantly changing, yet always just being itself. It remains still as the seasons flow into one another and as the weather changes, moment by moment, and day by day. Calmness abiding all change.

In summer, there's no snow on the mountain except perhaps for the very peaks. In fall, the mountain may wear a coat of brilliant fire colors. In winter, a blanket of snow and ice. In any season, it may find itself at times enshrouded in clouds or fog or pelted by freezing rain. People may come to see the mountain and comment on how beautiful it is or on how it's not a good day to see the mountain. None of this matters to the mountain which remains at all times its essential self. Clouds may come, and clouds may go. The mountain's magnificence and beauty are not changed one bit by the way people see it or not or by the weather. Seen or unseen, in sun or clouds, broiling or frigid, day or night, it just sits, being itself. At times, visited by violent storms, buffeted by snow and rain and winds of unthinkable magnitude. Through it all, the mountain continues to sit unmoved by the weather, by what happens on the surface, by the world of appearances.

And in the same way, as we sit in meditation, we can learn to experience the mountain. We can embody the same unwavering stillness and rootedness in the face of everything that changes in our own lives over seconds, over hours, over years. In our lives and in our meditation practice, we constantly experience the changing nature of mind and body and of the outer world. We have our own periods of light and darkness, our moments of colour and our moments of drabness. Certainly, we experience storms of varying intensity and violence in the outer world and in our own minds and bodies. We endure periods of darkness and pain, as well as the moments of joy. Even our appearance changes constantly, experiencing a weather of its own.

By becoming the mountain in our meditation practice, we can link up with its strength and stability and adopt it for our own. We can use its energies to support our energy to encounter each moment with mindfulness and equanimity and clarity. It may help us to see that our thoughts and feelings, our preoccupations, our emotional storms and crises, even the things that happen to us, are very much like the weather on the mountain. We tend to take it all personally but its strongest characteristic is

impersonal. The weather of our own lives is not to be ignored or denied. It is to be encountered, honoured, felt, known for what it is and held in awareness. And in holding it in this way, we come to know a deeper silence, and stillness, and wisdom. Mountains have this to teach us and much more if we can come to listen.

Reference: Mindfulness Meditation, CD Series 2, Jon Kabat-Zinn

Mindful Eating Practice

Holding

First, take the jolly rancher and hold it in the palm of your hand or between your finger and thumb. Focus on it. Imagine that you've just dropped in from Mars and have never seen an object like this before in your life.

Seeing

Take time to really see it; gaze at the jolly rancher with care and full attention. Let your eyes explore every part of it, examining the highlights where the light shines, the darker hollows, the lines in the candy, and any asymmetries or unique features.

Touching

Turn the jolly rancher over between your fingers, exploring its texture, maybe with your eyes closed if that enhances your sense of touch. Does it feel sticky or do some other touch sensations arise?

Smelling

Holding the jolly rancher beneath your nose, with each inhalation drink in any smell, aroma, or fragrance that may arise, notice as you do this anything interesting that may be happening in your mouth or stomach.

Placing

Now slowly bring the jolly rancher up to your lips, notice how your hand and arm know exactly how and where to position it. Gently place the jolly rancher in your mouth, without sucking, notice how it gets into your mouth in the first place. Spend a few moments exploring the sensations of having it in your mouth, exploring it with your tongue.

Sucking

When you are ready, prepare to suck on the jolly rancher, notice how and where it needs to be for sucking. Then, very consciously, take one or two licks and notice what happens in the aftermath, experiencing any waves of taste that emanate from it as you lick it. Take another couple of licks, notice the bare sensations of taste and texture in the mouth and how these may change over time, moment by moment, as well as any changes in the object itself.

Following

Finally, see if you can feel the traces of the sucked jolly rancher in your stomach, and sense how the body as a whole is feeling after completing this exercise in mindful eating.

Calming Tool: Grounding

Grounding is a very helpful technique for anxiety especially under the following conditions:

- Anxiety takes you out of the moment and you can only think about the past or future
- Anxiety makes you feel like you are not here or things are not real (derealization),
- Anxiety makes you feel like you are not in your body (depersonalization)
- Anxiety takes you back to a past event as if you are back in that event (flashback)

Grounding teaches you to stop losing touch with the present moment by concentrating and focusing on the present or by directing your attention to something else.

Some Examples of

- Touch objects around you, and describe them (texture, color, size, attributes). For example, "I'm sitting on a red chair, and the fabric is really soft; it's velvet. The carpet is beige, and there is a red couch in the corner."
- Focus on an object in your environment and describe it fully (texture, color, size, attributes). "I see the clock, it has black numbers and 2 hands, the hands are pointing to 2 and 3. The longer hand is pointing to 3. The clock also has the date on it. The date is ..."
- Run water over your hands, and describe aloud how it feels.

5-4-3-2-1 (Tool)

Put out hand and with each number touch the finger or put the finger down. (We will show you this)

5: Name 5 Present Facts (the day is..., I am wearing..., the president is...)

4: Things You Can See

3: Things You Can Touch and Touch them

2: Things You Can Hear

1: Thing that makes you really happy

Color (Tool)

Find Every Color of The Rainbow in The Room and Name the objects in your mind.

Calming Tool: Humor

Humor is a very helpful calming technique for anxiety as it:

- Engages our smart brains and takes us out of worry
- Sends signals to our body that this is a calm time
- Serves as a calming mechanism in itself, making us laugh and giving us perspective

Some Examples of Humor

- Why did the tissue dance? Because it had a boogie in it.
- What did the spider do on the computer? Make a web site.
- Why did the picture go to jail? Because it was framed.
- Quick humor videos: sites such as funny or die or you tube have lots of humor content, parents, please review ahead of time to make sure humor is age appropriate.

Keys to Using Humor as a Calming Skill

- Don't use it as a way to avoid the issue
- Have it be quick and easily accessible
- Have it help you to engage your smart brain

What humor helps you the most (Circle all that apply)?

Silly Jokes

Silly Movies

Physical/ Slapstick

Quick Wit

Bathroom humor

Funny Videos

Others: _____

Calming Tool: Calming the Senses

Using our senses to help us calm our body can be very powerful:

- Our senses can trigger our anxiety system to be on high alert or to be calm
- Our senses can ground us in the moment and give us some perspective
- Our senses can quickly trigger memories or powerful emotions that can calm us down

Calming with the Senses

- Touch: Magnetic balls, stress ball, molding clay, fidgets, or bean bags
- Smell: Lavender, coconut, cucumber, oleander, fruit, or other calming smells
- Hearing: Calming / soothing music
- Vision: calming pictures, images, places (can store on your phone)
- Taste: certain foods can be calming, yet we advise to use other methods. Foods to avoid include caffeine and sugary foods as they have been shown to impact our anxiety system

Find Your Calming Senses

- Touch: _____

- Smells: _____

- Sounds/Songs: _____

- Vision/s: _____



