



calming technique

ANXIOUS BREATHING

You might already know that we breathe in oxygen and we breathe out carbon dioxide. In order for the body to run efficiently, it is necessary to balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide, and this balance is maintained through how fast and how deeply we breathe. This can vary depending on our level of activity.

When we are anxious, this balance is disrupted. We take in more oxygen than our body needs (we over-breathe or hyperventilate). When this imbalance is detected, the body responds with chemical changes that produce dizziness, light-headedness, confusion, breathlessness, blurred vision, numbness and tingling in the extremities, cold clammy hands, muscle stiffness, and an increase in heart rate.

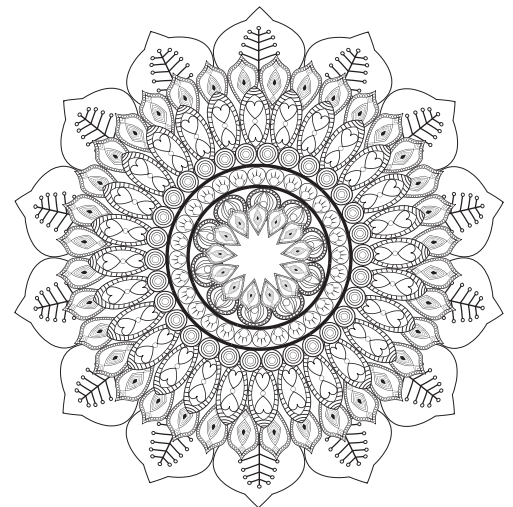
The normal breathing rate is 10-12 breaths per minute. *What's yours?*

THE CALMING TECHNIQUE

While over-breathing or hyperventilating are not necessarily dangerous, continued over-breathing can leave you feeling exhausted or "on edge" so you're more likely to respond to stressful situations with intense anxiety and panic. Gaining control over your breathing involves slowing your breathing and changing your breathing style.

Follow these steps:

1. Sit on a comfortable chair or lay on a bed.
2. Take a breath in through the nose for 4 seconds.
3. Hold the breath for 2 seconds.
4. Release the breath through the nose for 6 seconds.
5. Pause slightly before breathing in again.



BREATHING TIPS

- When you begin changing your breathing, it may be difficult to slow down your breathing to this rate. You may want to try using a 3-in, 1-hold, 4-out breathing rate to start off.
- When you are doing this exercise, make sure you are breathing through your stomach rather than your chest. You can check this by placing one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest. The hand on your stomach should rise when you breathe in.
- Try to practice once or twice a day at a time when you can relax and be free of distractions. This will help create a more relaxed breathing habit. Practice is key so try to set aside time every day.

By using this technique, you can slow down your breathing and reduce your general level of anxiety. As you practice, it can help reduce your anxiety during anxious situations.