Relaxed Breathing

When we are anxious or threatened our breathing speeds up in order to get our body ready for danger. Relaxed breathing (sometimes called abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing) signals the body that it is safe to relax. Relaxed breathing is slower and deeper than normal breathing, and it happens lower in the body (the belly rather than the chest).

How to do relaxed breathing
• To practice make sure you are sitting or lying comfortably – close your eyes
• Try to breathe through your nose rather than your mouth
• As you breath in, allow your belly to expand and then your chest will follow
• Deliberately slow your breathing down. Breathe in for a count of 4, pause, then breathe out for a count of 8 – the outbreath should be twice as long as the in-breath
• Make sure that your breaths are smooth, steady, and continuous - not jerky
• Pay particular attention to your out-breath - make sure it is smooth and steady

Am I doing it right? What should I be paying attention to?
• Relaxed breathing should be low down in the abdomen (belly), and not high in the chest. You can check this by putting one hand on your stomach and one on your chest
  Try to keep the top hand still, your breathing should only move the bottom hand
• Focus your attention on your breath - some people find it helpful to count in their head to begin with ("In ... two ... three ... four ... pause ... Out ... two ... three ... four ...")

How long and how often?
• Try breathing in a relaxed way for at least a few minutes at a time - it might take a few minutes for you to notice an effect. If you are comfortable, aim for 5-10 minutes
• Try to practice regularly - perhaps three times a day

Variations and troubleshooting
• Find a slow breathing rhythm that is comfortable for you. Counting to 4 isn’t an absolute rule. Try 3 or 5. The important thing is that the breathing is slow and steady and the outbreath is longer than the in-breath
• Some people find the sensation of relaxing to be unusual or uncomfortable at first but this normally passes with practice. Do persist and keep practicing
PHRASES TO REMEMBER:

1. I hear you saying ______ -- (reflection / clarification)
2. Replace BUTS with AND! -- (reduces conflict of 2 things, understanding)
3. Please, help me understand.... -- (clarification)
4. When you _____, I feel _____ -- (consequence of behavior)
5. I NOTICE ___; I WORRY ____; I WONDER ____ -- (collaboration phrase)
6. I need some time to process this. I will get back to you in ___ time. -- (cool off, organize)

CONSTRUCTIVE CRITICISM:

1. Focus on behavior, not intentions or personality
2. Focus on the effect of behavior
3. Focus on communicating the positive behavior you want more of
4. Be specific, prompt, and calm
5. Make sure the other person is receptive...pick the right time
6. Use phrases like “I would like you to do ____ as it would have ______ good effect”

NON-VERBAL TIPS:

1. Practice power posing to feel more in control & confident
2. Notice what makes you feel safe & drop it -- (safety behaviors / bad habits)
3. Cease repetitive behaviors -- (foot shaking; hair touching)
4. Have arms / hands open -- (receptive / collaborative)
5. Match non-verbals with verbal -- (consistent, strong message)
6. Make sure non-verbals aren’t negative -- (collaborative, open)
7. Sit up / stand up straight and strong -- (confident)
Unhelpful Thinking Styles

**All or nothing thinking**
Sometimes called ‘black and white thinking’

*If I’m not perfect I have failed*

*Either I do it right or not at all*

**Over-generalising**
“everything is always awful”
“nothing good ever happens”

Seeing a pattern based upon a single event, or being overly broad in the conclusions we draw

**Mental filter**
Only paying attention to certain types of evidence.

Noticing our failures but not seeing our successes

**Disqualifying the positive**
Discounting the good things that have happened or that you have done for some reason or another

*That doesn’t count*

**Jumping to conclusions**
There are two key types of jumping to conclusions:

• Mind reading (imagining we know what others are thinking)

• Fortune telling (predicting the future)

*2 + 2 = 5*

**Magnifying (catastrophizing) & minimizing**
Blowing things out of proportion (catastrophizing), or inappropriately shrinking something to make it seem less important

**Emotional reasoning**
Assuming that because we feel a certain way what we think must be true. Emotions drive thoughts.

*I feel guilty so I must be to blame*

**should must**
Using critical words like ‘should,’ ‘must,’ or ‘ought’ can make us feel guilty, angry or like we have already failed

If we apply ‘shoulds’ to other people the result is often frustration / anger

**Labelling**
Assigning labels to ourselves or other people

*I’m a loser*

*I’m completely useless*

*They’re such an idiot*

**Personalisation**
Blaming yourself or taking responsibility for something that wasn’t completely your fault. Conversely, blaming other people for something that was your fault.

“this is my fault”

#HackYourBrain
SLEEP HYGIENE RULES

1. Never use the bedroom for anything but sleep or sex. Read, watch TV, exercise, eat, text, etc. somewhere else.

2. Never look at the clock during the night! Set your alarm and trust it. If you look at the time, you’ll start to worry and/or do math about how many hours of sleep you have left, both of which will decrease the chance you will go to sleep.

3. Lie down to go to sleep only when you feel sleepy. Otherwise, try to stay out of the bedroom and do something a little boring, until you feel sleepy.

4. If you are in bed but unable to go to sleep within 15-20 minutes, get up and go to another room. Sit upright and read semi-boring material. Stay up until you feel sleepy and then return to bed. If you can’t sleep, repeat this, even if it lasts all night. It’s not ideal, but it will help your sleep load build for more natural sleep the next night.

5. Set your alarm to get up at the same time of day, regardless of how much sleep you had.

6. Develop a deep breathing / diaphragmatic breathing exercise that you can do before bed and in bed if you can’t fall asleep or if you wake up during the night. This will very quickly lower your heart rate, blood pressure, and body temperature, all of which are needed to fall asleep.

7. Turn on the lights or walk outside in the sun as soon as you get up in the morning.

8. No naps during the day! That will only decrease your sleep load and make it harder to get to sleep at night, furthering the problem.

9. Exercising in the morning or afternoon will help you sleep, but exercising in the late evening may stimulate your body and make sleeping more difficult.

10. Keep your room temperature cooler at night – 65-68 degrees F is ideal.

11. Take a shower 30 minutes before bed – it will raise your temperature, and then it will drop, which is what is needed for going to sleep.
12. Relax before bed and create a good bedtime routine that lasts 20-30 minutes to condition your body for sleep....EX: take a shower/wash face, get in PJs, sniff lavender oil, light a candle, organize things for the morning, dim lights, do a gratitude exercise, get in bed, do deep breathing.

13. Eat evening meals at least 2 hours before going to bed. Have a light snack (peanut butter, small sandwich) if needed. Large meals (and hunger) can inhibit sleep.

14. Avoid caffeine and alcohol after 2pm. Avoid refined sugars in the evening. Foods like chocolate, tea, coffee, soda, and any alcohol will inhibit quality sleep. Tobacco and alcohol disrupt sleep and should be avoided.

15. Avoid the use of over-the-counter sleep medicines, as they can become chemically and behaviorally addictive.

16. Avoid phone, computer and TV at least an hour before bed – the blue light cues the brain for wakefulness. If you have to use your phone, make sure it’s on nightshift (warmer light) mode.

17. Practice radical acceptance: “I don’t know what time it is, but if I’m up, I’m going to go with it……I don’t know why I can’t sleep, but that is ok – I’m going to notice what it’s like to be up at night.”

18. Don’t try to sleep. That will just get you frustrated. Just be open to the experience of whatever comes up.
Suicide

If you or someone you know is in an emergency, call The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or call 911 immediately.

Each year more than 34,000 individuals take their own life, leaving behind thousands of friends and family members to navigate the tragedy of their loss. Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death among adults in the U.S. and the 3rd leading cause of death among adolescents.

Suicidal thoughts or behaviors are both damaging and dangerous and are therefore considered a psychiatric emergency. Someone experiencing these thoughts should seek immediate assistance from a health or mental health care provider.

Know the Warning Signs
Identifying the suicide warning signs is the first step towards protecting your loved one.

- Threats or comments about killing themselves, also known as suicidal ideation, can begin with seemingly harmless thoughts like “I wish I wasn’t here” but can become more overt and dangerous
- Increased alcohol and drug use
- Aggressive behavior. A person who’s feeling suicidal may experience higher levels of aggression and rage than they are used to.
- Social withdrawal from friends, family and the community.
- Dramatic mood swings indicate that your loved one is not feeling stable and may feel suicidal.
- Preoccupation with talking, writing or thinking about death.
- Impulsive or reckless behavior.

Is There Imminent Danger?
Any person exhibiting these behaviors should get care immediately: They are putting their affairs in order and giving away their possessions They are saying goodbye to friends and family Their mood shifts from despair to calm They start planning, possibly by looking around to buy, steal or borrow the tools they need to commit suicide such as a firearm or prescription medication A licensed mental health professional can help assess risk.

Who is at Risk for Suicide?
Research has found that about 90% of individuals who die by suicide experience mental illness. Oftentimes it is undiagnosed or untreated. Experiencing a mental illness is the number one risk factor for suicide.
A number of things may put a person at risk of suicide:

- **Substance abuse**, which can cause mental highs and lows that exacerbate suicidal thoughts
- **Intoxication** (more than one in three people who die from suicide are found to be intoxicated)
- **Access to firearms** (the majority of completed suicides involve the use of a firearm)
- **Chronic medical illness**
- **Gender** (though more women than men attempt suicide, men are 4 times more likely to die by suicide)
- **History of trauma**
- **Isolation**
- **Age** (people under age 24 or above age 65 are at a higher risk for suicide)
- **Recent tragedy or loss**
- **Agitation and sleep deprivation**

**Can Thoughts of Suicide Be Prevented?**

Psychotherapy such as cognitive behavioral therapy and dialectical behavior therapy, can help a person with thoughts of suicide recognize unhealthy patterns of thinking and behavior, validate troubling feelings, and learn coping skills.

Medication can be used if necessary to treat underlying depression and anxiety and can lower a person’s risk of hurting themselves. Depending on the person’s mental health diagnosis, other medications can be used to alleviate symptoms.

See more at: [https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Related-Conditions/Risk-of-Suicide](https://www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Related-Conditions/Risk-of-Suicide)

*Updated March 2015*
Values

Our values reflect what we find meaningful in life. They are what you care about, deep down, and what you consider to be important. Everybody’s values are different, and they can change over time. They reflect how we want to engage with the world, with the people around us, and with ourselves.

Values are different from goals. Put crudely, goals can be achieved whereas values are more like directions that we want to head in. For example we might have the value of being a good parent which may require a lifetimes’ effort, and the specific achievable goal of getting our children to school on time. Or we might have the goal of going for a jog while placing value upon our physical health.

The domains below are valued by some people. There might be values you think are important, and others that don’t matter so much to you. There are no ‘right’ answers. Read the descriptions and think about what makes for a meaningful life that you could value.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Question</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>What kind of relationships do you want to have with your family?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What sort of brother / sister / mother / father / aunt / uncle / niece / nephew do you want to be? How do you want to be in those relationships?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marriage / Couple / Intimacy</td>
<td>What kind of husband / wife / partner do you want to be?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What kind of relationship do you want to be a part of?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What sort of partnership do you want to build?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What kind of person do you want to be in a relationship?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting</td>
<td>What sort of parent do you want to be?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What qualities do you want your children to see in you?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What kind of relationships do you want to build with them?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friendships / Social life</td>
<td>What sort of friend do you want to be?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What friendships is it important to cultivate?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>How would you like to act towards your friends?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What kind of social life matters to you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Career / Employment</td>
<td>What kind of work is valuable to you?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What qualities do you want to bring as an employee?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What kind of work relationships would you like to build?</td>
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<td>What kind of work matters to you?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education / Personal growth &amp; development</td>
<td>How would you like to grow as a person?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What kind of skills would you like to develop?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What matters to you about education and learning?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What would you like to know more about?</td>
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<td>Recreation / Fun / Leisure</td>
<td>How would you like to enjoy yourself?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What relaxes you?</td>
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<td>When are you most playful?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spirituality</td>
<td>What kind of relationship do you want with God / nature / the Earth?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Citizenship / Environment / Community</td>
<td>What kind of environment do you want to be a part of?</td>
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<td>How do you want to contribute to your community?</td>
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<td></td>
<td>What kind of citizen would you like to be?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health / Physical wellbeing</td>
<td>What kind of values do you have regarding your physical wellbeing?</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How important to you is your health?</td>
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<td>How do you want to look after yourself?</td>
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</table>
1) For each of the domains write a brief description of your values (e.g. to be a caring partner [marriage], to never stop learning [personal development], to deepen my relationship with nature [spirituality]).

2) Then rate each domain according to how important it is to you (0 = not important, 10 = very important).

3) Finally, give each domain a rating according to how successfully you have lived your life in accordance with this value in the past month (0 = not at all well, 10 = very well).

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