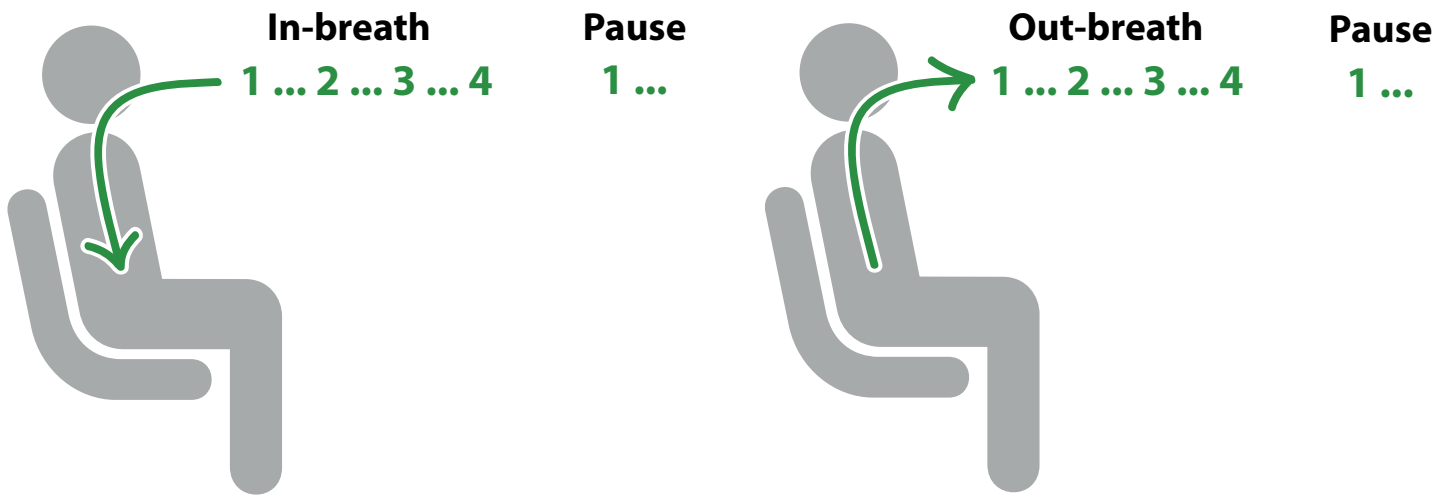# Relaxed Breathing

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).

In-breath 1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4   **Pause** 1 ...   **Out-breath** 1 ... 2 ... 3 ... 4   **Pause** 1 ...

How to do relaxed breathing
• To practice make sure you are sitting or lying comfortably.
• Close your eyes if you are comfortable doing so.
• Try to breathe through your nose rather than your mouth.
• Deliberately slow your breathing down. Breathe in to a count of 4, pause for a moment, then breathe out to a count of four.
• 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 ... pause ...").

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.
• 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.

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