

Counting and Breathing Exercise

Breathe in slowly and deeply while slowly counting (to yourself) "one-and-two-and-three-and-four-and-five-and . . ." Go as high in counting as you can, if possible, to about 8 or 9. But don't be anxious if you can't breathe in very deeply at first. Your stomach should rise while you are doing this exercise.

Hold the breath in for the count of "one-and-two."

Then exhale slowly and deeply while counting *slowly* to yourself, "one-and-two-and-three-and-four-and-five-and . . ." Push the air out as much as you can, so that your belly and chest push out as far as they can. You should be able to count to a higher number when breathing out than you were able to count while breathing in.

Caution: Do this exercise only 2-3 times *each time you practice it* or you might hyperventilate (get too much oxygen in your system). Practice it several times a day, especially before anxiety-related activities.

Why it works:

- If we put our thoughts on simple tasks like counting and breathing, then they are not focused on emotions.
- Also, the oxygen gets into our bloodstream and helps us relax.