Breathing Exercises for Self-Regulation

Self-regulation involves managing your own thoughts, feelings, and actions in a way that helps you feel calmer, safer, or more in control (Andrikos et al., 2024). Breathing exercises are a great tool to support self-regulation when you are feeling stressed, anxious, or upset.

Smell the Flower, Blow Out the Candle:



Imagine that you're smelling your favorite flower. Take a deep breath in through your nose, trying to smell as much of it as possible. When you need to breathe out, imagine that you're trying to blow out all the candles on a birthday cake with one deep breath (Reif, 2015; Specialist Community Learning Disability Service, 2020).

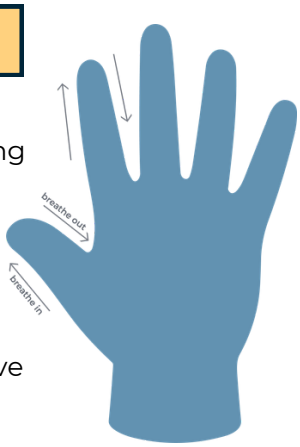


Belly Balloon:

Place one hand on your stomach and the other on your chest. As you take a deep breath in through your nose, let your belly fill up like a balloon. Breathe out through your mouth and slowly let the balloon empty (Center for Intensive Behavioral Supports, n.d.; Dialectical Behavior Therapy, n.d.; Hippe, 2022; Specialist Community Learning Disability Service, 2020).

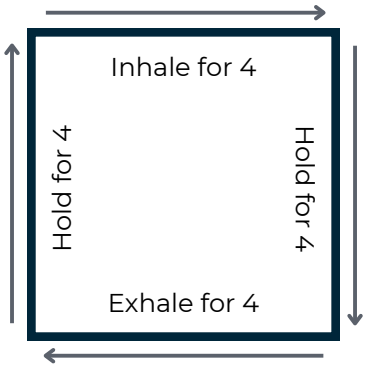
Finger Breathing:

Hold up one hand and slowly trace around it, using a finger from your other hand. Breathe in as you trace up each finger and breathe out as you trace down. Continue for all fingers (Center for Intensive Behavioral Supports, n.d.; Hippe, 2022).



Box Breathing:

Imagine you're drawing a square as you inhale for four counts, hold for four counts, exhale for four counts, and hold again for four counts (Hippe, 2022).



Key Takeaway

Breathing exercises are a simple way to help your body and mind slow down. Practice finding the techniques that works best for you when you are already calm so they are easier to use when you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

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MENTAL HEALTH
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