

Deep Breathing

Take one “Cleansing Breath” Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, and then exhale slowly through your mouth.

Next: Breathe in for a count of 4, and exhale for a count of 8. Repeat this 3 times. This replicates your breath during sleep and your body will automatically start relaxing.

Alternative Breathing Technique

Nadi Shodhana/Alternate Nostril Breathing: Balance your inner masculine and feminine energy (which easily gets out of balance in these times) by doing alternate nostril breathing:

Sit comfortably with your back straight and eyes closed. Place the tip of the right thumb on the edge of the right nostril and the right, ring finger hovering over the left nostril. Closing off the right nostril inhale through the left for a count of 3. Close the left nostril then exhale through the right for a count of 3, inhale through the right for a count of 3. Close the right nostril and exhale through the left... this was 1 round of Nadi Shodhana, do 9 more then build up to at least 20. (If you are more of a visual learner there are lots of videos on YouTube for alternate-nostril breathing)

It is normal when beginning Pranyama (breathing exercises) to get a little dizzy, if this happens just resume normal breathing until it passes.

Visualisation Technique

I Am A Bear Relaxation Technique

Adapted from Maureen Murdock's *Spinning Inwards*.

In Play in Family Therapy

This technique can be used by teachers to help their students focus on the strength and courage they possess to overcome their fears. This technique can be used with elementary school children to college level students. I have personally seen master-level students respond

to this technique positively and enthusiastically. Some teachers will have crayons or markers available to their students to complete this exercise.

Teachers can start in a low lit room to help induce relaxation. In a soft voice read the following to your students:

I want you to close your eyes and focus your attention on your breathing. Take a deep breath in through your nose and hold it...now slowly exhale out of your mouth... again, breathe in deeply and slowly exhale. Focus on your breathing; you will become more and more relaxed with every breath. Take a deep breath in, slowly breathe out, and relax. As you continue to breathe slowly, relaxing more and more with each breath, feeling safe and content, imagine that you are on a path in a thick forest... it is very safe here, and all around you are beautiful lush trees. As you walk down the path, notice the trees, notice the foliage and notice all the different colors being illuminated by the sun's rays coming through the trees. Smell the pine and floral around you, breathe in the scents, relaxing you even more. As you walk further into the woods, you hear the sound of water and you walk towards it. You come to a small stream. As you walk closer to the stream, you notice your reflection in the water, the wind gently blows and creates a ripple in the water, and you see your reflection start to slowly change. As the gentle wind calms and the stream is still again, you notice that instead of your face being reflected in the water, you see the reflection of a bear. This is your inner bear, your inner strength and courage. A part of you that is strong and confident. Concentrate on this reflection (pause for a few seconds here). What kind of bear is it? What color is it, what color are its eyes? Is your bear wearing anything special, any symbols that represent you? Does your bear have any special markings on it? Concentrate on it. (pause again for a few seconds).

Good, now I want you to concentrate even harder. I want you to try and feel the energy and strength of your bear. Let that feeling wash over you with every breath that you take... breathe in its strength. Take in a big deep breath and let that feeling of strength wash over you with every breath you take. As you breathe in the strength of your bear exhale any doubt that you have. Take in about 3 more breathes here, and continue to exhale your doubts. (pause for them to comply) Good. Know that your strength and courage are present with you at all times, and you can summons this feeling whenever fear is near. This bear like quality of strength that you possess can help you overcome your fears, it can help you change habits, and accomplish your goals. This strength is always with you.

Now I'm going to slowly count backwards from 5 to 1, and on 1 you will slowly open your eyes and create a picture of your bear. With each number that you hear, I want you to focus more intensely on your bear, bringing him back with you, remembering what he looked like in the stream. 5...concentrate on your bear, 4... see your bear clearly, 3... you feel strong and confident, 2... start to feel alive and awake, and 1... slowly open your eyes.

Good, now I want you to take the next the 5 minutes to draw your bear.

Progressive Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation script

Find yourself a quiet place to relax. Turn off your phone and dim the lights. This is your time...a time for complete and utter relaxation.

For this relaxation, you can either sit or lie down. Just make sure that you are warm enough, and that you are comfortable. Let your hands rest loosely in your lap, or by your side. Now close your eyes.

Become aware of your breathing, and notice how your abdomen rises and falls with each breath...

Now take a long slow deep breath in through your nose, all the way down into your stomach. Hold the breath for just a moment, and then exhale through your mouth. Allow your breath to carry away all stress and tension as the air floods out of your lungs.

Take another slow breath in through your nose. Fill your lungs completely. Hold it for a moment...and release the breath through your mouth. Empty your lungs completely.

Take a third deep breath in. Hold it for a moment, and then let it go.

Feel that your body has already undergone a change. The tension in your body has begun to loosen and subside.

Now let your breathing rhythm return to normal...and relax....

During this relaxation I will ask you to tense various muscles throughout your body. Please do this without straining. You do not need to exert yourself, just contract each muscle firmly but gently as you breathe in. If you feel uncomfortable at any time, you can simply relax and breathe normally.

Bring your awareness to your feet and toes. Breathe in deeply through your nose, and as you do, gradually curl your toes down and tense the muscles in the soles of your feet. Hold your breath for just a few seconds and then release the muscles in your feet as you breathe out. Feel the tension in your feet wash away as you exhale. Notice how different your feet feel when tensed and when they are relaxed.

Take another deep breath in again, tense the muscles in the soles of your feet and hold this position for a few seconds.

Now release. Feel yourself relaxing more and more deeply with each breath. Your whole body is becoming heavier, softer and more relaxed as each moment passes.

Now bring your awareness to your lower legs...to your calf muscles. As you draw in a nice deep breath, point your toes up towards your knees and tighten these muscles. Hold for just a moment, and then let those muscles go limp as you exhale.

Once again, draw in a deep breath...and tighten your calf muscles. Hold for a few seconds, and then let it all go. Feel your muscles relax, and feel the tension washing away with your out-breath.

In a moment you will tense the muscles in the front of your thighs. If you are lying down, you can do this by trying to straighten your legs. You'll feel the muscles pulling your kneecap upwards. If you are seated, you can tense these muscles by pushing your heels down onto the floor.

Take a deep breath in, and tense the muscles in your thighs. Hold for just a moment, and then release everything. As you do this, the blood flow to your muscles increases, and you may notice a warm tingling sensation. Enjoy this feeling of soothing relaxation in your thighs.

Again, breathe in deeply and tighten your thigh muscles. Hold for a moment. Now release. Focus on letting your muscles go limp and loose.

Draw in a nice deep breath and gradually tighten the muscles in your buttocks. Hold this contraction for a few seconds, and then release your breath. Feel the tension leaving your muscles. Feel them relaxing completely.

Once more, breathe in deeply and tighten the muscles in your buttocks. Hold for a moment. Now release them. You are becoming more and more deeply relaxed.

Take another breath, and this time, gradually tighten all the muscles in your legs, from your feet to your buttocks. Do this in whatever way feels natural and comfortable to you. Hold it...and now release all these large strong muscles. Enjoy the sensation of release as you become even more deeply relaxed.

Now bring your awareness to your stomach. Draw in a nice deep breath and then tighten these muscles. Imagine you are trying to touch your belly button to your spine. Now release your breath and let your muscles relax. Notice the sensation of relief that comes from letting go. Once again, draw in a deep breath and then tighten your stomach muscles. Hold for a few seconds... and then let them relax as you exhale and release all tension.

Bring your awareness to the muscles in your back. As you slowly breathe in, arch your back slightly and tighten these muscles....Now release your breath and let your muscles relax. Again, draw in a deep breath and then tighten your back muscles. Hold for a few seconds...and then let them relax and release.

Now give your attention to your shoulder muscles and the muscles in your neck. As you slowly draw in a nice deep breath, pull your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze these muscles firmly. Now breathe out completely, and allow your contracted muscles to go loose and limp.

Again, pull your shoulders up towards your ears and squeeze these muscles firmly. Now feel the tension subside as you relax and breathe out.

Feel the heaviness in your body now. Enjoy the feeling. Feel yourself becoming heavier and heavier. Feel yourself becoming more and more deeply relaxed.

You are calm, secure, at peace.

Now it's time to let go of all the tension in your arms and hands. Let's start with your upper arms. As you breathe in, raise your wrists towards your shoulders and tighten the muscles in your upper arms. Hold that breath and that contraction for just a moment...and then gently lower your arms and breathe all the way out. You may feel a warm, burning sensation in your muscles when you tighten them. Feel how relaxing it is to release that tightness and to breathe away all tension.

As you curl your upper arms again, tighten the muscles as you breathe in. Breathe in deeply. Now relax your arms and breathe out.

Now bring your awareness to your forearms. As you breathe in, curl your hands inwards as though you are trying to touch the inside of your elbows with your fingertips. Now feel the tension subside as you relax and breathe out.

Again, take a deep breath in, and tighten the muscles in your forearms. Hold it for a moment, and then release them. Feel the tension washing away.

Now, take another breath in and tightly clench your fists. When you have finished breathing in, hold for just a few seconds, and then release. Notice any feelings of buzzing or throbbing. Your hands are becoming very soft and relaxed.

Take another deep breath in and clench your fists again. Hold for just a few seconds, and then release. Let your fingers go limp.

Your arms and hands are feeling heavy and relaxed.

Take a couple of nice long slow breaths now, and just relax. Feel yourself slipping even deeper into a state of complete rest.

Now tighten the muscles in your face by squeezing your eyes shut and clenching your lips together. As you do, breathe in fully. Hold it...now breathe out and relax all your facial muscles. Feel your face softening.

Once more, breathe in deeply while you scrunch the muscles in your eyes and lips....and release.

Now bring your awareness to the muscles in your jaw. Take a deep breath in, and then open your mouth as wide as you can. Feel your jaw muscles stretching and tightening. Now exhale and allow your mouth to gently close.

Again, fill your lungs with air and then open your mouth wide. Now let your mouth relax and let your breath flood all the way out.

You are now completely relaxed from the tips of your toes to the top of your head. Please take a few more minutes to rest. Relax. Listen to the sound of your breathing and enjoy the lovely, warm sensation of physical relaxation. If you have the time, feel free to fall asleep. You will wake feeling completely rejuvenated and relaxed.

Grounding Technique

Grounding is a technique that helps keep someone in the present. They help reorient a person to the here-and-now and in reality. Grounding skills can be helpful in managing overwhelming feelings or intense anxiety. They help someone to regain their mental focus from an often intensely emotional state.

Grounding skills occur within two specific approaches: Sensory Awareness and Cognitive Awareness

1. Sensory Awareness

Grounding Exercise #1:

Begin by tracing your hand on a piece of paper and label each finger as one of the five senses. Then take each finger and identify something special and safe representing each of those five senses. For example: Thumb represents sight and a label for sight might be butterflies or my middle finger represents the smell sense and it could be represented by lilacs. After writing and drawing all this on paper, post it on your refrigerator or other safe places in the home where it could be easily seen and memorize it.

Whenever you get triggered, breathe deeply and slowly, and put your hand in front of your face where you can really see it – stare at your hand and then look at each finger and try to do the five senses exercise from memory.

Source: www.stardrift.net/survivor/senses.html

Grounding Exercise #2:

- Keep your eyes open, look around the room, notice your surroundings, notice details.
- Hold a pillow, stuffed animal or a ball.
- Place a cool cloth on your face, or hold something cool such as a can of soda.
- Listen to soothing music
- Put your feet firmly on the ground
- FOCUS on someone's voice or a neutral conversation.

Sensory Awareness Grounding Exercise #3:

Here's the 54321 "game".

- Name 5 things you can see in the room with you.
- Name 4 things you can feel ("chair on my back" or "feet on floor")
- Name 3 things you can hear right now ("fingers tapping on keyboard" or "tv")

- Name 2 things you can smell right now (or, 2 things you like the smell of)
- Name 1 good thing about yourself

(Source: www.ibiblio.org/rcip//copingskills.html)

2. Cognitive Awareness Grounding Exercise:

Re-orient yourself in place and time by asking yourself some or all of these questions:

1. Where am I?
2. What is today?
3. What is the date?
4. What is the month?
5. What is the year?
6. How old am I?
7. What season is it?

More Grounding Technique

Grounding is a way of helping yourself cope with stressful periods in your life. While the intrusive symptoms of traumatic stress – like flashbacks, memories, and upsetting thoughts – cannot always be stopped, you can learn techniques that will minimize their impact. Grounding techniques can help you regain a sense of safety and control in your life. They can help you anchor yourself in the here and now and keep you from getting lost in the past.

Below you will find a description of several grounding techniques.** One (or more) of these techniques is likely to suit you better than the others. Choose the technique that you would like to focus on and practice it regularly, especially when you are feeling well. If you become good at using the technique during non-crisis times, you will be better equipped to use it when you are in crisis.

Seated Grounded Posture: This is a posture in which both feet are on the floor and your spine is straight, but not rigidly so. In this posture, you are actively aware of your body's existence and its connection to the ground. Your legs should be uncrossed – this allows the flow of energy to pass freely through the body. Your hands may be resting on your thighs or on the arms of the chair. Your head is held high. Notice the way your body rests in the chair; notice the way your feet are resting on the ground. This is a posture that can allow you to feel both strong and at ease.

Mindful Walking: Walk carefully, mindfully around the room. Mindful walking can be slow or brisk. The goal is to be fully present with each step as you take it. Bring your attention to the actual sensations of walking. Notice how the heel, then the ball of your foot makes contact with the floor as you walk. Notice the bend in your knees, the flex in your toes, the shift in your weight with each step you take. When your attention wanders, bring it back to your walking. Center yourself in your body and be present in the moment. Count ten steps, and ten more, and ten more, until you feel calmed.

Writing / Saying Grounding Statements: Develop several grounding statements that remind you that you are safe and provide you with comfort. You may want to write the statements on a small piece of paper or “flashcard” and carry them around in your wallet. You may want to write the statement on a larger piece of paper that you will hang on a wall in your home. Write your statements in a color that represents safety and strength to you. You can say the statements out loud, or simply read or think them. Examples of grounding statements include:

- “This feeling will soon pass.”
- “You are no longer a child. You are an adult now, and you are safe.”

- “You are strong; you are safe now.”

Develop your own grounding statements, ones that have special meaning for you.

Grounding Through Breathing: The breath serves wonderfully as a focus for your attention. Think of it as an anchor that holds you in the present moment and guides you back to the here and now when your mind wanders to the past. By bringing awareness to your breathing, you are reminding yourself that you are here now. Breathe in and attend to the feeling of breathing in; breathe out and attend to the feeling of breathing out. You may want to focus on the air coming in and out of your nostrils or on your abdomen expanding and contracting as you breathe. You may want to count ten breaths on the exhale, and keep counting groups of ten breaths until you feel calmed. You may also want to use calming, grounding statements as you breathe, like:

- Inhaling, “I am breathing in calm.” or “I am breathing in good energy.”
- Exhaling, “I am breathing out anxiety,” or “I am breathing out bad energy,” or “I am safe.”

Other Grounding Techniques

- Dance and/or sing to a song that makes you feel good.
- Stamp your feet. Feel the power in your legs.
- Visual grounding
 - o Make eye contact with a safe person.
 - o Scan the room to remind yourself that you are here now.
 - o Don't direct your gaze downward: Look up, look out, look around.
- Hold, look at, listen to and/or smell a grounding object. Grounding objects may be distinguished by their smell, shape, weight, sound, or texture. Any object that comforts you, that helps you to remember that you are in the present, rather than the past, can be a grounding object. Some examples are:
 - o A smooth stone that you've found on the beach
 - o A bell that, when you ring it, has a soothing sound
 - o A piece of sandpaper with a course texture
 - o A photograph of a beautiful scene or of loved ones
 - o A small vial of a pleasant fragrance
 - o A piece of jewelry, like a ring or bracelet
 - o A picture that you've drawn of a scene that represents safety and comfort.

You may want to hold, look at, smell, listen to your grounding object while engaged in one of the other grounding techniques. For example, you can hold your stone while repeating your grounding statements, while walking mindfully, or while doing grounding breathing. This way, you strengthen the grounding properties of your grounding object because it becomes associated with other experiences of comfort and safety. If your grounding object is small enough, you can carry it with you wherever you go. Knowing that you have access to a small oasis of calm and comfort right there can help.

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Guided Imagery *A Peaceful Place*

Script for “Peaceful Place” Guided Imagery

This is a time for you to release and receive.....

To begin, find a comfortable position. This may be seated in a chair, lying on your back on the floor, or in a bed. See if you can align your head, neck and shoulders in a way that feels supported.

Begin to become aware of your breathing.....the rise and fall of your breath. No need to change anything or work at it, just inhale easily and exhale fully..... Inhale nourishing, refreshing breath and exhale any tension or discomfort. In with calm.....out with any worry.....the steady rise and fall of your breath....

If thoughts should arise and compete for your attention, there is no need to engage or interpret. Likewise, if feelings or emotions surface, simply let them pass through and be gone. Thoughts or feelings can be like bubbles in a glass, rising to the surface and released.....simply focus your awareness on your breathing and the increasing sense of peace and softness within yourself.....

See if you can inch your breath lower and lower into your body....your muscles soften, your joints soften.....creating easy comfortable space within yourself.

As you continue to watch the rise and fall of your breath, take note of any place within yourself where you might be holding pain or discomfort.....if so, simply send your next breath to that spot. Watch as your breath arrives, surrounds, comforts and gently loosens any pain or tension, releasing it to be carried away as you exhale. You may note that two or three breaths are beneficial. Watch as your breath arrives, surrounds, gently loosens and allows the release of discomfort, sending it away as you exhale.....

Now that you are feeling soft and comfortable, allow yourself to travel to a place that is safe and free....a place where you have no worries, no responsibilities, only peace and pleasure.....perhaps it's a place where you've vacationed.....a place from your childhood....a place you'd like to visit.....your home.....somewhere that is free of deadlines, free of pain.....

If you are having difficulty settling on a location, simply take a full breath and exhale, and allow the place to present itself....to come into focus.

And so you are arriving.... and have arrived. This special place of peace and safety is coming clearly into focus..... Allow yourself to take in your surroundings.....notice the colors.....perhaps sky blue, or water's blues and greens, perhaps the earth tones of a forest.....the sandy beach.....maybe the glow of a fire.....the colors of flowers or vegetation.....Notice the light of this place...

And what do you hear? Maybe the wind in trees, or waves crashing upon a shore.....birds singing, the pop or crackle of a fire....

What do you smell? Perhaps the fragrance of flowers or blooms.....the salt of ocean air....the aroma of your favorite food being prepared.....the cool earthly smells of the forest

What other sensations are in this place? Maybe the sun on your face or hands, the softness of pine needles beneath your feet, or the shifting of sand beneath and between your toes.....maybe you notice the comfort of a sofa or chair upon which you're resting...maybe you notice the warmth of a fire's glow....

This is a place to which you've traveled to receive the comfort, the peace, the restorative power that is here for you.....you can come here any time you choose.....it is a place you carry within yourself at all times.....always available.....this is a place of connection.....a place where you will find and reconnect with your inner strength, your wisdom, your true or higher self.....the sensations of calm peacefulness you experience here are even now helping you find clarity, strength, healing.....in this place, you receive what you need to be and feel whole – to recognize yourself in this place of safety, of freedom, of connection...

Each time you travel here, you are reminded, renewed, replenished.....in this place you may invite others to join you....those who love and care about you,.....those you love and treasure.....those who offer you wisdom or comforting presence.....

In this place, special things happen and are possible for you.....

For now, knowing that you can return whenever you would choose, take a look again at your surroundings.....the colors, the sounds, the aromas, the sensations.....take it all in...and prepare to make the short trip back.....perhaps there's something for which you're grateful for having this experience.....if so, simply take note and tuck it away for later.....

And now, find yourself returning to your chair, floor or bed.....you may want to wiggle your toes or fingers to feel yourself as you are.....peaceful, calm, gently strong, better for the experience.