

## Controlled (Tummy) Breathing

Below you will see a relaxation guides to help you reduce any physical feelings of nerves or anxiety. When we get nervous or anxious our heart rate and breathing increase. Sometimes you will feel this happening and other times it might be gradual, so you don't notice it until our pulse feels very fast.

While feelings of nervousness are completely natural and normal, they can be unpleasant to experience. It can be really helpful to be able to calm our body through controlled breathing, as it then helps us to calm our mind.

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**Step 1:** Sit comfortably with your eyes either closed or 'locked' onto a focus point. Have your feet flat on the ground, place one hand on your chest and one on your stomach.

**Step 2:** Spend time paying attention to your body. Notice your breathing, the pace and depth of each breath. Don't try to change your breathing at this moment. Pay attention to any sensations in your muscles, do you notice if you feel tense or tight in any particular areas.

**Step 3:** Bring your focus back to your breathing and your hands. Notice whether the hand on your chest is moving or the hand on your stomach is moving in and out.

**Step 4:** Imagine there is a balloon in your stomach and each time you breathe in the balloon inflates, causing your stomach to push out. When you breathe out the balloon deflates, and your stomach goes back in. Try to do this. You may need to use your stomach muscles (diaphragm) initially, which is completely fine.

**Step 5:** Continue to do this for a minimum of 3 minutes, thoughts will come into your head, just bring your focus back to your breathing each time.

**Step 6:** Once you feel comfortable, you can bring your hands down and continue to breathe using your stomach. Spend time reflecting on your breathing, are the breaths slower and deeper than before? Does your body still feel as tense or have muscles began to relax and loosen off? Gradually open your eyes or 'unlock' your focus.

