

Three-part breathing exercise

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Purpose

This exercise can be used to create a focus for yourself before and after coaching sessions. It can also be used with clients to help them relax and focus at the beginning of a session. It can be used successfully in tele-coaching sessions.

Description

A timeless technique that can be used to calm the mind, create clarity and reduce stress and anxiety. I detail the exercise in three easy steps.

Process

This exercise is best done sitting comfortably in a chair with your spine upright. Let your feet be flat on the floor about 18 inches apart. Place your hands on your knees, your palms facing upwards. Draw your chin slightly towards your chest in order to lengthen the back of your neck. Relax your shoulders and allow yourself to feel open across your chest. Close your eyes and open your mouth. Let your face soften. Have an expansive sense of taking up as much space in your body as you can. Let go of any tightness or tension. Release and relax your whole body. This preparation need only take a few seconds.

Now give attention to your breath. Place one hand over your lower abdomen.

- **First part**
Breathe in through your nose *slowly and fully*, raising your abdomen. Open your chest and completely fill your lungs (your hand should lift upwards).
- **Second part**
Hold your breath comfortably, keeping your body totally still for a count of four. (This can be increased with practice.)
- **Third part**
Exhale slowly through your nose and empty your lungs completely. Feel your abdomen pulling down towards your spine (your hand will be lowered).

Repeat this three-part breath three to seven times. Let your body relax and your mind become clear. Continue to focus on your breath. This exercise can be done for two minutes, five minutes, 10 minutes or more depending on the time available and your level of concentration.

This exercise allows full and correct use of the breathing apparatus. It restores movement to the diaphragm and intercostal muscles. Five times more oxygen is taken into the lungs and transported around your body's cells. This helps to flush out toxins. The nervous system relaxes and concentration improves. The mind begins to slow its activity and become clearer. An ability to control the breath is fundamental to reducing stress, enhancing health and maximizing success.

Pitfalls

The only word of caution relates to the short retention of breath in the second part of the breathing exercise. If this feels uncomfortable at all, the exercise can be done using only the first and third parts. The count of four as outlined above is a suitable starting place for healthy individuals.

Bibliography

Arewa, C. S. (2003) *Embracing Purpose, Passion and Peace*, London: Inner Vision Books.