Calm breathing

Slow breathing with a longer out-breath, to calm the body.

When we are anxious we breathe fast and high in the chest. Slowing the breath down, and making the out-breath longer than the in-breath, switches on the body's calming system. It will not make anxiety vanish, but it takes the edge off and gives you something steady to do.

How to do it

1. Sit or lie comfortably. Drop your shoulders. Put one hand on your belly.
2. Breathe in gently through your nose for a count of 4. Let your belly rise under your hand.
3. Pause for a moment.
4. Breathe out slowly through your mouth for a count of 6, as if you were blowing on hot soup.
5. Carry on for three to five minutes. If your mind wanders, bring it back to the counting.

Tips

- **Slow, not deep.** Big gulps of air can make you dizzy. Keep the breath slow and low in the belly.
- **Practise when calm.** Twice a day for a few minutes. It is easier to use under stress once you have practised it when calm.
- **Find your own count.** If 4 and 6 feels strained, try 3 and 5. The out-breath being longer is what matters.
- **Use a cue.** Link it to something you already do: the kettle boiling, sitting into the car, getting into bed.

Day	Morning practice	Evening practice	What I noticed
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			
Sun			

A caution

If you have panic attacks, use breathing as a way to steady yourself, not as a way to escape the feelings. The sensations of panic are safe, with or without breathing exercises.

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