

Breathing Through Anxiety Activity



Focus/Content Description

This activity is designed to provide your members an opportunity to learn about ways to use mindful breathing to help decrease feelings of anxiety. It can be done before chapter meetings, big events or anytime a group of members are together.

The activity should last **approximately 10** minutes.

This activity **does not** have pre-requisites.

Learning Outcomes

At the end of the session, participants should be able to:

- Identify the two different types of breathing.
- Effectively utilize a newly learned breathing exercise.

Supplies

1. Supplies for sharing definitions of the two types of breathing, either in-person on a whiteboard, flip chart paper etc., or typed and shared virtually.
2. Relaxing music for deep breathing, optional

Preparation

1. Write definitions of thoracic/chest breathing and diaphragmatic/abdominal breathing on either flip chart paper or electronically, depending on how you will facilitate the activity.

Space Set-Up

1. If In-Person: Choose a quiet space where members will be able to spread out.

- If Virtual: Inform participants ahead of time that a quiet, private space will be best for the activity.

Resources Utilized

- [VeryWellMind](#)

Facilitate

Introduction		Total Time: 2 Minutes
3 Minutes	<p>Talking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greet everyone and thank them for joining/participating/attending. Introduce yourself as the facilitator for the activity. Share that the topic being discussed is anxiety and that if anyone feels uncomfortable at any time that they should feel free to leave the room and/or exit the virtual space. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tip: If virtual, let participants know they do not need to be on video for the activity. Before beginning the deep breathing exercise, explain the definitions of breathing. 	

Breathing Definitions		Total Time: 5 Minutes
	<p>Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definitions are taken directly from VeryWellMind. Be sure to give proper credit verbally to participants. 	
Discussion		
5 Minutes	<p>Talking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will learn three things: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The two different types of breathing How deep breathing can help to reduce anxiety and increase relaxation A simple breathing exercise to do anytime Ask the group if anyone knows the difference between thoracic and diaphragmatic breathing. <i>Allow for responses.</i> Share the definitions of the two types of breathing, according to VeryWellMind: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diaphragmatic (abdominal) breathing: This type of breathing is a type of deep, even breathing that engages your diaphragm, allowing your lungs to expand and creating negative pressure that drives air in through the nose and mouth, filling your lungs with air. This is the 	

	<p>way newborn babies naturally breathe. You're also probably using this pattern of breathing when you're in a relaxed stage of sleep.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Thoracic (chest) breathing: This type of breathing comes from the chest and involves short, rapid breaths. When you're anxious, you might not even be aware that you're breathing this way. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ask for ideas of what might happen when people engage in chest breathing. <i>Allow for responses</i> and then share the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Chest breathing causes an upset in the oxygen and carbon dioxide levels in the body resulting in increased heart rate, dizziness, muscle tension, and other physical sensations. ● Ask for ideas of what might happen when people engage in abdominal breathing. <i>Allow for responses</i> and then share the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deep breathing helps you to avoid the "fight-or-flight" response to stressful situations. In these situations, your body's automatic systems are on high alert and signal your heart to beat feaster and breathing rate to increase. By consciously becoming aware of your breathing and regulating its depth and rate, the likelihood of spiraling into a panic or anxiety attack is lowered.
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Breathing Exercises	Total Time: 5 Minutes
	<p>Directions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prepare for the breathing activity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If In-Person: Instruct the members to spread out in the room allowing for at least an arm's length between each person. They can sit in chair, sit on the floor or even stand if they would like. ○ If Virtual: Simply inform participants that they will now be participating the activity portion.
Discussion	
5 Minutes	<p>Talking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Share that they are going to practice a very quick breathing exercise that can be used anytime and anywhere. ● Optional: Turn on the relaxing music for deep breathing. ● Ask the group to quiet their minds and their mouths and follow the next instructions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Place one hand on their forehead and the other hand on their stomach. ○ Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. Keep your shoulders relaxed. Your abdomen should expand and your chest should rise very little.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Exhale slowly through your mouth. As you blow air out, purse your lips slightly but keep your jaw relaxed. You may hear a soft “whooshing” sound as you exhale. ○ Repeat these steps at least five times but as many as necessary to calm your body and mind. <p>Share that this breathing exercise can be practiced several times a day and some people find it helpful to play soothing music while breathing. Others prefer silence. They should find what works best for them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Following the activity, share with participants the other examples from VeryWellMind of breathing exercises they can continue to try. Encourage participants to try a variety to find what works best for them.
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Wrap Up/Debrief		Total Time: 2 Minutes
Reflection/Final Takeaways		
2 Minutes	<p>Talking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reiterate return on investment by participating in the program: understanding the two types of breathing and learning a new breathing exercise to virtually use at any time. ● To close the session, ensure participants have been provided a link to the website, VeryWellMind (above), where all the content for the activity came from. ● Answer any final questions and then close by thanking everyone for their participation. 	