

Breathing through Anxiety



Activity 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 sisters are together.

The activity should last approximately 10 minutes.

Learning Outcomes

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

- Identify the difference between shallow and deep breathing.
- Utilize the deep breathing exercise practiced whenever they need to.

Supplies:

1. Flip chart paper
2. Markers
3. Relaxing music for deep breathing (optional)

Preparation:

1. Write definitions of thoracic/chest breathing and diaphragmatic/abdominal breathing on flip chart paper.

Resources Utilized:

1. <https://www.verywellmind.com/abdominal-breathing-2584115>

Room Set-Up:

1. Choose a space where members will be able to spread out and the room will be quiet.

Facilitate

Breathing through Anxiety Symptoms

- Before getting the members up out of their seats for the deep breathing exercise, walk them through the definitions of breathing below.
- 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.

Breathing Definitions

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| 4 Minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain that today they are going to learn the following 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. Check for responses.• Share the definitions of the two types on the flip chart.• Ask for ideas of what might happen when people engage in chest breathing. Check for responses 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. Check for responses and then share the following:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Deep breathing helps you to avoid the “flight-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 Exercise

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| 6 Minutes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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.• Share that they are going to practice a very quick breathing exercise that can be used anytime and anywhere.• Turn on the relaxing music for deep breathing. (optional)• 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.○ 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. |
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="467 184 1469 254">○ Repeat these steps at least five times but as many as necessary to calm your body and mind.<li data-bbox="370 258 1414 359">● 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.
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