

DIY Instant Calmer

The mind/body connections provide their own resources or tools to deal with times when emotional arousal may be unhelpful in the given situation. Too much emotional arousal prevents clear, rational thinking.

The tools are more effective, if they are used early, for example, before the arousal level goes too high. High arousal requires more effort to achieve a result.

The secret is to practice these techniques when you are not feeling stressed or out of control.

First step

Recognise a feeling when the resulting thoughts/actions may not be helpful, if allowed to develop.

Second step

Say 'freeze' to yourself, then choose instant calming technique from breathing, distraction or exercise.

Breathing

1: Sit down comfortably, or lie down.

2: Concentrate on your breathing. You cannot be relaxed and worked up at the same time. The OUT breath stimulates the relaxation response in your body and brain, so ALWAYS start with an OUT breath. If you have been hyperventilating over something, you may have to force yourself to do an OUT breath but it will work to stimulate the relaxation. When you breathe out, try and make it as long as you can. Count slowly as you breathe out. Try to count to 7

3: Breathe IN. Again count this breath and it needs to be shorter than the out breath. Most people when they start, can count 5 on the in breath.

4: Repeat steps two and three as much as you like or feel you need to. If you do it long enough, when lying down, you should fall asleep. The aim is to reach the count of 11 on the OUT breath and 7 on the IN breath but it's not essential. What is essential is that the OUT breath is ALWAYS longer than the IN breath.

Distraction

Twenty second trick - force emotional arousal down (generally a right brain hemisphere activity), by engaging in a left brain activity. For example, a mental exercise such as listing things alphabetically, learning poetry, mental arithmetic, spelling backwards, reading backwards, translating into another language.

This exercise can also include creative activities, where mental sorting has to occur eg: playing/writing music, writing stories, painting, cooking, embroidery, gardening, craft work.

Exercise

When exercising, the body releases 'feel-good' chemicals called endorphins. This generally occurs after 20-30 mins of exercise that increases the heart rate. If you cannot get outside the home, be creative in thinking up something that can be done inside. e.g.: Dancing TV, exercise video, small trampoline, bike etc: