

Managing stress

Controlling your breath

Using 'controlled breathing' you can slow your breathing down to a better rate. This helps to fend off uncomfortable physical feelings such as dizziness, chest pains, light headedness, and shortness of breath that can be part of a stress reaction. This helps to stop the cycle of panic and the feelings will pass.

Step 1.

Try to get into a slower and stable breathing rhythm. A good rhythm is to breathe in for 3 seconds, hold this breath for 2 seconds and breathe out for 3 seconds. Make sure you don't take too big 'gulps' of air while doing this.

Step 2.

It can be helpful to count to yourself as you do this (e.g. "in-2-3-hold for 2-out-2-3).

Step 3. As you breathe, try to make sure that your stomach expands as you take each breath. This helps you stop breathing from the chest which results in short shallow breaths which can add to the problem.

Step 4.

Repeat this action for a few minutes. The uncomfortable sensations should start to fade away.

This type of breathing can be used as part of a relaxation technique at any time. If possible it would be helpful to practice this breathing at times when you feel less anxious. This will mean you are able to master the technique for times when your symptoms are more troublesome.