

RELAXATION TECHNIQUE**Slow down your breathing.**

Each breath should take 5 slow counts.

Count 1 and 2 as you breathe in through the nose. Try and push your stomach out.

Count 3, 4 and 5 as you slowly breathe out through the mouth. Imagine you are cooling a bowl of soup in front of you.

(So breathing out takes longer than breathing in, but both are unhurried).

Don't fret about each breath being exactly the same duration.

Breath control is absolutely vital in fighting anxiety and panic. When we panic, our breathing becomes fast and shallow. The effect is to make us light-headed.

Try and focus on your breathing, but don't beat yourself up if you find yourself composing your shopping list. Just gently bring it back to focus on your breathing.

Once you feel you've mastered this breath control, combine it with muscular relaxation by getting into a stress-reducing posture.

Posture

- **Shoulders** Let your shoulders drop
- **Elbows** Open them away from your body
- **Hands** Extend your fingers and thumbs slowly, slowly clench to as far as feels comfortable, and slowly extend
- **Knees** Apart but not too far
- **Feet** Keep firmly on the floor
- **Back** Upright
- **Neck** Also upright, not backwards or forwards
- **Jaw** Keep jaw a bit slack – no clenched teeth
- **Forehead** Don't tighten it. There should be a smooth sensation from your eyebrows to the back of your neck

Relaxation is an important part of your tool kit

Learn and practise this technique BEFORE you really need it

Adapted from “*Physiological Relaxation by Voluntary Control*” by Laura Mitchell