



A Young Adult's Guide to Deep Breathing as a Relaxation Technique

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Contributed by Beverly Vicker

I get nervous or tense sometimes when I am at work. Everybody gets nervous or tense sometimes.

When I am home and I get nervous, I can go to my room and relax. I might lay on my bed or turn on some soothing music. Other people might listen to relaxation tapes. Some like tapes with the sound of the ocean surf.

When I am at work, I can't lay down or put on a tape. I will have to use other ways to calm myself.

If there is a "big" problem at work, I may need to talk to my supervisor or job coach. He or she can help me find ways to solve the problem.

Some problems, however, are "little" problems. I solve them by myself. I can deal with "little" problems by helping to relax myself. When I am tense, I can't think well. I think better when I am calm.

There are many things that people can do to get rid of tension. Many of them cannot be done at work. Many of them would draw attention to me even if I could do them at work.

One strategy for "little" problems is called Deep Breathing. It is a safe and easy thing to do, if I follow the rules. It also is something that I can do without other people knowing that I am tense and am trying to relax. I want to take responsibility for myself as much as I can because I am an adult. Deep Breathing is an important strategy for me to know.

I need to practice Deep Breathing when I am not nervous or tense. When I can do it easily and correctly many times in practice, then I can try it in a real situation.

Before I begin to practice, I need to know something about me.

- I need to know what it feels like to breathe normally and how deep breathing is different. First, I will want to watch my stomach and my chest to see how much they move away from my body when I do normal breathing. Then I want to watch my stomach and my chest when I am taking in more air or oxygen. I will want to close my eyes and think about how each way of breathing FEELS DIFFERENT.
- I need to know how many times I normally breathe per minute. Most people, when they breathe normally, breathe somewhere from 12-20 times per minute. My Mom or someone else can help me time myself. Knowing what is normal for me is very important. When I deep breathe, it should be less than normal. If it is not, I'm doing the deep breathing too fast and I may not relax.

These are the things I need to do to practice:

- I need to take in a little more air through my nose than normal breathing. I can use my imagination to help me relax. I can pretend that the breath is coming up to my chest through Swiss Cheese holes in my feet. I can still tell myself to "calm down" while doing the breathing.
- Then I need to hold my breath for about 5 -10 seconds. A respiratory therapist said this step is important. I need to let the air SLOWLY escape from between my lips. My lips can be open just a little so no one knows what I am doing. It should take 3-5 seconds to let the air out.



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Maybe Mom or my job coach can help me decide when I am ready to use Deep Breathing in a real situation.

Deep Breathing won't help me fix all of my problems. But, it is nice to know a strategy that may help me some of the time. Adults like me need to know many strategies for helping ourselves in a world that is often busy and confusing. I like to feel relaxed as often as I can.

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