



MANAGING SYMPTOMS CONTROLLED BREATHING EXERCISE

During periods of stress and overwhelm, the body triggers symptoms known as the stress response. In this state our breathing becomes shallow and rapid, our heart rate increases, and our muscles tense up. The opposite state to the stress response is the body's relaxation response. Here our breathing slows down and becomes deeper, our heart rate decreases and returns to a steady state, and most of our anxious or stress based symptoms quickly start to subside.

To achieve a relaxation state through our breathing we want to **slow down**, and control our breathing by getting it in to a **steady rhythm**.

One of the quickest and most effective exercises to achieve this is by using a steady rhythm formula such as the 4 - 2 - 6 rhythm. Follow the steps below to practice this exercise.

- ☞ If possible, practice this while in a safe and calm environment. Seated and relaxed is preferred (at least during the initial practice).
- ☞ Take a breath in for **4** seconds (through the nose if possible).
- ☞ Hold the breath for **2** seconds.
- ☞ Breathe out for **6** seconds (through the nose if possible), then pause slightly before repeating for 10 to 20 breaths or as needed.
- ☞ Practice this regularly (preferably a couple of times a day initially). When you have mastered the controlled breathing technique this can then be utilised any time you notice your anxious symptoms coming on.