



ECO-ANXIETY TOOLKIT

BREATHING TECHNIQUES

WHAT?

If you are experiencing eco-anxiety or any sort of anxiety, it can be very useful to learn how to ground yourself. Your breath is an incredibly useful tool that can be used to transform your state of mind, your long term mental health and how you respond to particularly challenging situations. When you control and tune into your breath, you actively regulate your parasympathetic system, effectively putting the brakes on your instinctive fight-or-flight reaction to stress-inducing situations.

HOW?

Breathing techniques can help control anxiety by promoting relaxation, reducing the physiological symptoms of stress and shifting your focus away from anxious thoughts.

WHY?

- CALMS THE HEART RATE
- ACTIVATES YOUR BODILY RELAXATION RESPONSE
- FOCUS AND DISTRACTION
- LONG TERM MENTAL HEALTH BENEFITS
- USEFUL TOOL FOR ALL ASPECTS OF LIFE



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INTRODUCTION

BREATHING TECHNIQUES

ANXIETY AND THE CLIMATE

In our eco-anxiety series, we aim to help you understand why you are feeling anxious and worried about the climate. We help you to recognise that many people experience these emotions in response to global problems and provide you with the tools to help manage them.

HOW TO USE THESE TECHNIQUES

If you often experience anxious thoughts about the climate crisis, it can help to practice breathing techniques on a regular basis. Just before bed is a good time to focus and empty the mind, likewise, the start of the day is also a beneficial time to set yourself up for a controlled day.

There are also techniques in this guide that can be used as coping mechanisms during times of intense anxiety and when you feel overwhelmed by a situation.

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SQUARE BREATHING

Square breathing can be used anywhere at any time. It is simple to remember and very effective at halting your hyperventilation cycle during moments of anxiety. This breathing technique allows you to focus your mind by visualising your breath.

1. Inhale through the nose for a count of 4

2. Hold the breath for a count of 4

3. Exhale through the mouth for a count of 4

4. Pause for a count of 4 before starting the next breath

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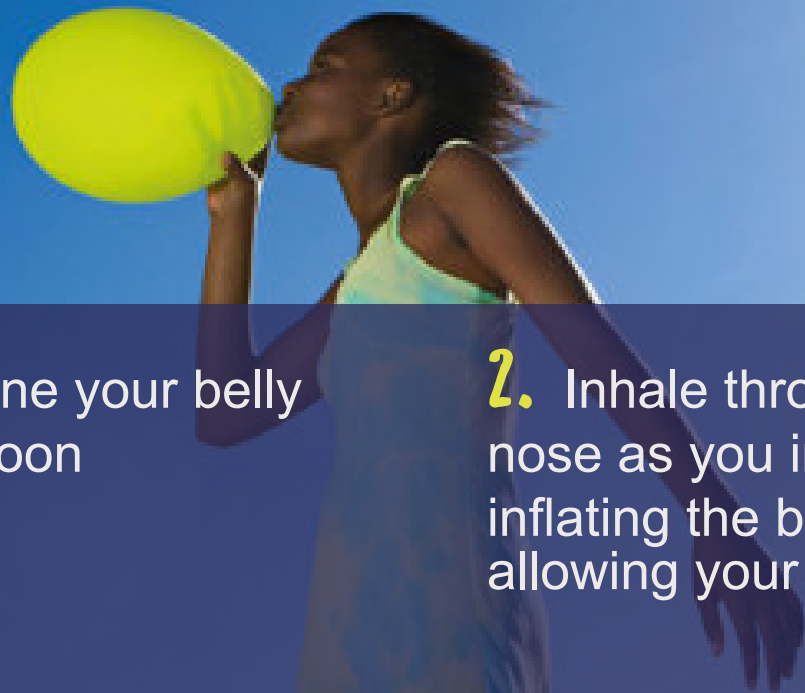


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BALLOON BREATHING

This deep breathing technique increases the oxygen supply to your brain and body, promoting a sense of calm and improving overall cognitive function. Oxygen is essential for optimal brain function, and proper oxygenation can help clear your mind and reduce feelings of tension.



1. Imagine your belly is a balloon
2. Inhale through your nose as you imagine inflating the balloon, allowing your belly to rise
3. As you exhale slowly through your mouth, imagine you are deflating the balloon and letting your belly fall
4. This encourages diaphragmatic breathing and relaxation

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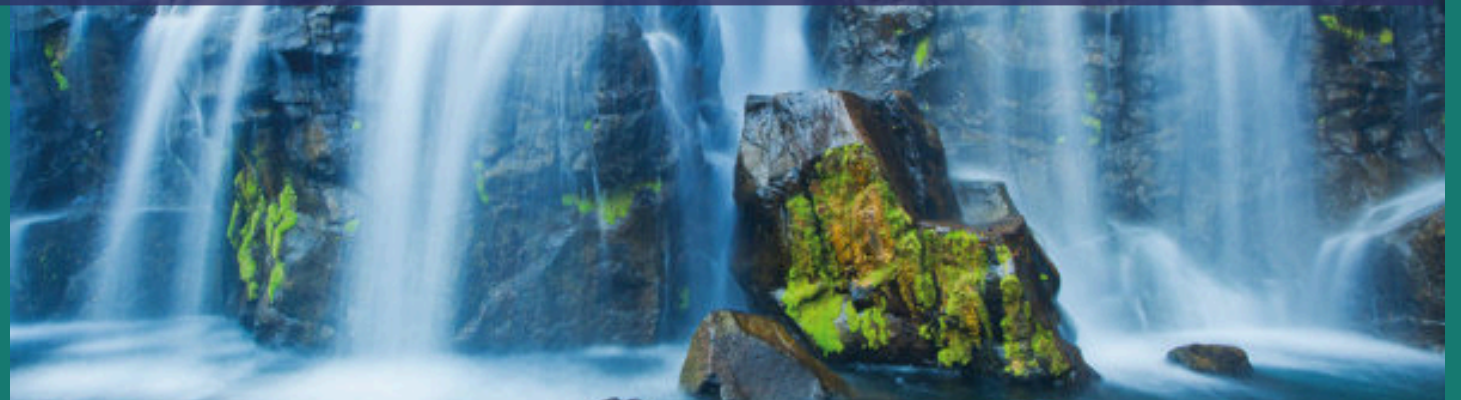


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VISUALISATION BREATHING

This visualisation breathing technique is individual and requires you to do some work to find your ultimate peaceful setting in your own head. Examples of calming scenes include waterfalls, oceans, forests or mountains. Choose whatever setting works for you. See our visualisation guide for more info.



1. Close your eyes and imagine a peaceful place or scene
2. As you inhale, imagine that you're breathing in the calm and beauty of this place
3. As you exhale, release any tension or worries
4. You can combine a counting breath with this technique too



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GOLDEN THREAD BREATHING



This technique works on the basis of focussing the mind on something other than your external concerns. By imagining the creation of a golden thread, you give yourself something to achieve, taking the mind away from the anxious situation whilst simultaneously slowing the heart.

1. Close your eyes and imagine a beautiful golden thread

2. Inhale for a count of 6, or the longest that you feel comfortable doing

3. As you exhale, imagine that you are blowing out the golden thread

4. Breathe out for as long as you can. The slower and longer that you breathe, the longer and more beautiful the thread will become

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Seek support from mental health professionals or support groups if eco-anxiety is severely impacting your well-being.

