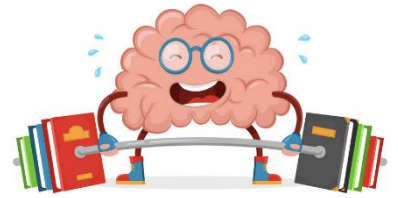


Train your Brain to be in the Moment



Worries can happen when our brain stops thinking about what is happening now and starts thinking about what might happen in the future. You can control worries by keeping your thoughts about what is happening now or 'being in the moment'. Being in the moment takes a little bit of practice so set aside a regular time to train your brain. It helps if you are feeling relaxed and calm when you practice. Here are just a few of the ways you can train your brain to be in the moment:

Learn Belly Breathing

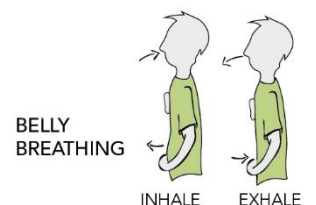
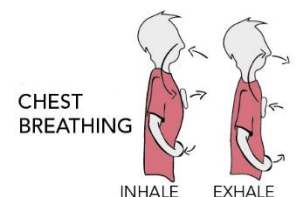


We usually breathe automatically, without thinking about it. But our breathing changes at different times of the day and when we have different feelings. For example, we sigh when unhappy, pant when exhausted, and hold our breath if we are scared.

How we breathe can have a big impact on what happens in the rest of our body so, being able to change how you are breathing can help your body and mind to stay calm. Focusing on your breathing, and nothing else, is also a really great way to bring your thoughts back to the now.

We can breathe in two different ways:

- **Chest breathing** – we usually do this when exercising and we see our chest move up and out. If we chest breathe all the time our body becomes tight and tense.
- **Belly (or abdominal/ diaphragmatic) breathing** – this happens when we get our diaphragm involved in our breathing. The diaphragm is a big muscle that is inside our bodies between our chest and our abdomen (the abdomen is the area around your belly button). When you belly breathe, your abdomen and not your chest goes in and out. Belly breathing helps you to stay calm.



How to Practice Belly Breathing

- Go somewhere calm and quiet (or block out the noise by listening to some soft, relaxing music through some headphones)
- Find a light book or toy and then lay down on your back on a soft carpet or mat (put a cushion under your knees if this makes you feel more comfortable).
- Place the book/toy on your abdomen.
- Place one of your hands on your chest.
- Fill your lungs with air by taking a slow, deep breath in through your nose. Try to make the toy on your abdomen rise upwards and your chest stay flat.
- Hold this breath for about 5-7 seconds.
- Now slowly breathe out for a count of 5-7 seconds. As you release the air from your lungs, gently tighten your belly (abdominal) muscles to completely push out all the air from your lungs. As you do this, the toy/book should move down.
- On your first go, try doing just 3 or 4 breaths in a row. You can increase this to more with practice.
- Once you can Belly Breathe lying down, practice doing it without the toy. Next try whilst you are seated or standing. The aim is for you to be able to control your breathing wherever you are.



Whenever your thoughts make your feelings too big, or wander into the future, practice your belly breathing to keep your brain and body calm and in the moment.

Learn Some Calming Moves



Any physical activity can pull your brain out of the future and back into the present. But it can be difficult to remember what moves to do when you feel worried. So, take some time to plan a calming physical routine. Choose a few moves that are not too energetic and that you can do anywhere without any equipment. Keep practicing these moves so that your body knows just what to do without too much thinking.

There are some great calming moves that are taught in Yoga. Yoga is a traditional form of exercise that focuses on strength, flexibility and breathing. Why not practice some Yoga moves and make them part of your calming physical routine?

Tree Pose



- Stand on both feet- legs straight, hands at your sides, back straight, and thigh muscles firm.
- Lift your right foot and place the base of your foot on your left inner thigh
- Press your hands together and raise them above your head.
- Gaze at a point about 1 ½ metres away from you.
- Hold this position for 30 seconds to a minute.
- Lower your hands to your chest and then lower your right leg.
- Repeat the position on your left leg.

Easy Pose



- Sit upright with your legs crossed. Rest your hands on your knees with the palms facing upwards.
- Try to balance your weight evenly across the bones you are sitting on.
- Keep your head, neck, and spine aligned in a straight line. Relax your feet and thighs.
- Stretch your spine but without stiffening your neck and shoulders.
- Retain this posture for a minute
- Change your cross-legged position so that the leg that was on the bottom is now on the top.
- Repeat the position for another minute.

Cat Pose



- From a kneeling position, lower your hands to the floor to support your upper body. Your back will be level and flat (this is called the tabletop pose).
- Your knees should be directly below your hips, and your toes curled.
- Your wrists, elbows, and shoulders should be straight and at right angles to the floor.
- Centre your head between your shoulders in a relaxed position. Look at the floor.
- Breath out and arch your spine up towards the ceiling.
- Allow your head to move towards the floor without forcing your chin towards the chest.
- Come back tabletop position as you breath in slowly.

Corpse Pose



- Lie on your back with your eyes closed, legs straight and feet slightly apart.
- Put your arms at your sides at least 15cm away from your body. Keep your palms faced upwards.
- Breathe normally while noticing your body weight pressing on to the ground.
- Slowly breath out and try to relax each part of your body, starting at your toes and moving up your body to the top of your head.

Mountain Pose



- Stand with your legs about 5cms apart. Stand straight and tall.
- Spread your toes.
- Keep the arms at your sides and relax your shoulders.
- Raise your arms above your head.
- Hold this position for as long as it is comfortable and breathe slowly.
- Gently lower your arms back to your sides.

Whenever you are doing your calming moves, try to keep your thoughts focused on how your body feels and what it is doing. This will help you to be in the moment.

Learn to Meditate



Meditation is all about taking control of your mind and thoughts. You can train your mind to feel more relaxed and be less full of thoughts. You can also train it to focus on what is happening around you. Mindfulness is a type of meditation.

Meditation doesn't need to take long or be complicated – it is about calmly focusing your mind on a particular object, a particular thought or particular activity. You might focus on your breath, a short mantra or chant, an object you can see or feel, a candle, or the sounds around you.

Getting Started with meditation

1. Before you start

- Choose an age appropriate meditation. When you first start to practice meditation, it can be helpful for someone else to talk you through the exercises. This could be a parent or a teacher in a meditation class. There are also lots of child-friendly meditations on YouTube and many meditation apps. Headspace is one app that has meditation for children in a range of themes such as Calm, Focus, and Sleep.
- Have realistic expectations of the experience, especially initially.
- Aim to start simple, broaden and lengthen the exercises over time. Start with just 2 mins then increase.
- Go to the toilet – we don't want any distractions!
- Chat about why you are doing the meditation and what you might feel.
- Choose a quiet, comfortable, and calm environment to meditate in.
- Dim lights and decide if you want to use music/sounds to block distractions and create a calm mood.

2. During the meditation

- Sit or lie down depending on the environment that you are in and the length of the meditation.
- Make sure you are comfortable.
- If you are using an app, or someone is reading a script, make sure that you can clearly hear what is being said.
- If you are reading the script, use a calm confident voice. Read slowly but steadily. Leave enough space between activities to reflect on what has been said whilst ensuring that the pace is quick enough to keep focus.
- During the meditation, try to keep your thoughts focused on the exercises and what is happening now. Every time your mind wanders, note that this has happened and bring your mind back to what you were focusing on. If you practice regularly, you can increase the time that you meditate and increase your concentration and focus.
- Be flexible as things may not go as planned. Big feelings may surface which could interrupt the meditation. You may just not be able to keep still. Be kind to yourself and try again another time.

3. At the end

- Share your experience of the meditation.
- Praise yourself for trying to meditate, even if you were restless or distracted. You can try again tomorrow!

Noticing as a form of meditation

Looking closely at something and really 'noticing' things about it can be a useful form of meditation. By just looking at one thing, we have fewer thoughts in our head and calm our minds if they are busy. Noticing something natural – a plant, grass, the sky, another living thing – can be really calming and it remind us to appreciate the life we have and the beauty of the world we live in.



Every time you feel worried, or your mind wanders, use a meditation technique that you have practiced to re-direct your attention on to what is happening now.