WORKSHEET 15 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

Slow breathing

Slow breathing to accompany anxiety

AIM

Learn slow, regular breathing (about 6 breaths a minute, with a slightly longer out-breath) to reduce physiological activation and regain a sense of control.

WHO IT IS FOR

Tension, physical anxiety, difficulty falling asleep. Adults and adolescents.

DURATION

5 min in session; 5 min twice a day

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Ask them to observe their usual breathing for a minute, without changing it.
2. Guide: breathe in through the nose for about 4 seconds, letting the abdomen rise, and breathe out gently for about 6 seconds.
3. Keep the breathing calm, without breathing in deeply: the aim is to slow down, not to breathe more.
4. Suggest regular practice at calm moments, so that it is available when there is anxiety.
5. Note the anxiety before and after.

POINTS TO WATCH

> In panic disorder, breathing must not become a safety behaviour ("if I don't breathe like this, something will happen to me"): present it as a practice, not as protection. Stop if there is dizziness or tingling (breathing too deeply).

REFERENCES

Zaccaro, A., Piarulli, A., Laurino, M. et al. (2018). How breath-control can change your life: A systematic review on psycho-physiological correlates of slow breathing. Frontiers in Human Neuroscience, 12, 353.

Clark, D. A. & Beck, A. T. (2010). Cognitive Therapy of Anxiety Disorders: Science and Practice. Guilford.

PSYCHOLOGIST'S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 15 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

Slow breathing

Breathing slowly sends the body a signal of calm. You don't need to breathe hard: the point is to slow down. Practise when you feel fine, so that it comes easily when anxiety rises.

1. Sit with one hand on your abdomen.
2. Breathe in gently through your nose for about 4 seconds, letting your abdomen rise.
3. Breathe out slowly for about 6 seconds, as if blowing on a candle without putting it out.
4. Carry on for 5 minutes. If you feel dizzy, breathe less deeply.

Day	Moment	Tension before /10	Tension after /10

What do I notice in my body after the exercise?

These exercises do not replace therapy. If you are in distress or having suicidal thoughts: 112 (European Union), 3114 (France) or the emergency number of the country where you live.

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