WORKSHEET 43 · FOR THE PSYCHOLOGIST

The calming sigh

A short breathing pattern with a long out-breath (cyclic sighing)

AIM

Offer a short breathing technique that can be used several times a day: a double in-breath through the nose followed by a long out-breath through the mouth, studied for reducing activation and improving mood.

WHO IT IS FOR

Stress, tension, moderate rises in anxiety. Adults and adolescents.

DURATION

5 min a day, or 1-2 min when needed

HOW TO RUN IT

1. Demonstrate the cycle: an in-breath through the nose, then a small extra in-breath to fill the lungs, then a slow, long out-breath through the mouth.
2. Do a few cycles together, without forcing, with the out-breath clearly longer than the in-breath.
3. Suggest a 5-minute practice each day for 2 weeks, noting mood before and after.
4. A few cycles can also be used when stress rises.

POINTS TO WATCH

> Don’t force the in-breath: stop if there is dizziness or tingling. As with any breathing technique, avoid it becoming a safety behaviour in panic disorder. The evidence is recent (one randomised trial): present it as one practice among others.

REFERENCES

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PSYCHOLOGIST’S NOTES

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WORKSHEET 43 · WORKSHEET TO HAND OUT

The calming sigh

Sighing is a natural way of releasing tension. You can practise it on purpose: two in-breaths through the nose and a long out-breath through the mouth.

1. Breathe in through your nose.
2. Add a small in-breath through your nose to fill your lungs a little more.
3. Breathe out slowly through your mouth, long, all the way.
4. Repeat for 1-5 minutes, without forcing. If you feel dizzy, stop.

Day	Duration	Mood before /10	Mood after /10

At what moments does this sigh help me most?

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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