

Deep Slow Breathing

5:3:5 Technique

Have you ever noticed how you breathe when you feel anxious or stressed?

Probably shallow and fast. When you're under stress and breathe shallow and fast your body releases **Adrenocorticotropin hormone (ACTH)** and **Acetylcholine (ACh)**.

Around the same time there is a decrease in Carbon Dioxide (CO₂). This reaction in the body tends to increase that panicky / anxious feeling.

Do you remember the old solution for dealing with “panic attacks”? It was suggested that you breathe into a paper bag and by doing so, you breathe back carbon dioxide back into your body. This in turn decreases ACTH and ACh which in turn makes you feel less anxious and panicky.

A paper bag however is not always available and would certainly attract unwanted attention if you happen to be doing this on the street. The alternative is to breathe deeply and slowly. This helps balance blood gases, which will help relax you.

The technique below can be used anywhere as a basic skill to relax.

When relaxed, you are more open to learning new information, and are more able to focus.

Remember, you are more likely to rely on useful strategies, make better decisions and otherwise perform better when you are not stressed.

5 3 5 technique.

Begin by breathing in slowly for a count of five, hold your breath for a count of three, breathe out slowly for a count of five, hold your breath for a count of three. Repeat this process for at least 10 to 15 minutes whenever you feel you are getting anxious or stressed. In fact it's a good idea to practice this technique under normal circumstances as a general relaxation strategy.

NOTE: please do not do this technique while driving or operating machinery.

