

## Breathing Exercises

Breathing exercises are incredibly helpful to send messages to your mind and body that you are okay, you are safe, you can calm, soothe, relax. When we are under stress our *sympathetic nervous system* (where our fight or flight system is based) is activated. However when we take slow deep breaths we help signal to our *parasympathetic nervous system* (our rest relax digest system) that we are safe and we can calm. Breathing exercises are not a magic wand, but they are a tool we can use to give ourselves the opportunity to calm and soothe when we need. There are different ways you can try breathing exercises. I have shared 4 ideas here:

### Simple breath

Place a hand on your tummy.  
Take a slow deep breath in through your nose  
As you breathe in you should notice the hand on your tummy being pushed out as your lungs/diaphragm fill up with air.  
Pause for a moment, holding the breath  
Slowly breathe out either through your nose or mouth as comfortable  
Repeat this x 3-5 times

### Colour breath

Take a slow deep breath in through your nose  
As you breathe in, imagine a soothing, calming colour washing through you  
Pause for a moment, holding the breath  
Slowly breathe out either through your nose or mouth as comfortable  
As you breathe out imagine breathing out the stress, tension, giving it a colour and imagine that colour leaving through the out breath  
Repeat this x 3-5 times

### Calming word breathing

Take a slow deep breath in through your nose  
As you breathe in, imagine a soothing, calming word or phrase that you can say to yourself e.g. 'Calm, Peace, Rest, I'm okay, I'm safe, I can get through this, this is tough but I can do this'  
Pause for a moment, holding the breath  
Slowly breathe out either through your nose or mouth as comfortable, saying this word or phrase in your mind.  
Repeat this x 3-5 times

### Movement and Breathing

Place your hands together in front of you  
Take a slow deep breath in through your nose  
As you breathe in, stretch your arms out wide to the sides or up above your head  
Pause for a moment, holding the breath  
Slowly breathe out either through your nose or mouth as comfortable, and as you do, slowly bring your hands and arms gently back in front of you  
Repeat this x 3-5 times