

Pre-interview relaxation techniques

The 15 minutes or so before an interview can be extremely harrowing, therefore it's important to know a technique you can use to keep anxiety at bay.

Breathing has a powerful influence over the physical state. People who are feeling nervous or worried tend to breathe more quickly (or hyperventilate) and this disturbs the balance between how much oxygen and carbon dioxide they take in.

This can lead to chemical changes in the body causing symptoms such as dizziness, confusion, light-headedness and breathlessness, along with an increased heart rate that in turn can lead to tingling in the extremities and muscle stiffness.

When a person is relaxed they breathe through the nose in an even, gentle way.

Deliberately copying a relaxed breathing pattern seems to calm the nervous system; this calming is known as the Relaxation Response.

Controlled breathing can cause physiological changes that include:

- lowered blood pressure and heart rate
- reduced levels of stress hormones in the blood
- reduced lactic acid build-up in muscle tissue
- balanced levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the blood
- improved immune system functioning
- increased physical energy
- increased feelings of calm and wellbeing

Exercise 1:

The normal breathing rate is 10-12 breaths per minute. This rate gives your body the right balance between oxygen and carbon dioxide. Measure your current breathing rate. What is it?

Exercise 2:

The Calming Technique. This simple exercise helps you to gain control over your breathing to induce a calm state of mind. It takes almost no time, requires no special equipment and can be done almost anywhere!

1. Take a breath in for four seconds through your nose. Try and use your stomach to take in the air, rather than your chest so that the breath is nice and deep. You can check where your breath is going by placing one hand on the stomach and one hand on the chest. The hand on the stomach should rise as you inhale.
2. Hold the breath for two seconds
3. Release the breath taking six seconds to fully exhale through the mouth
4. Pause slightly then repeat the process

Exercise 3:

Posture – Recent research on body language reveals we can change other people's perceptions – and our own body chemistry – simply by changing body positions. Sample power-pose to try:

1. Plant your feet widely and stretch your arms in a V-shape overhead – feeling more powerful?