

Calming anxiety in the moment

Easy · 5 min to do · Free

Stress triggers hormones that raise your heart rate and blood pressure. Slow belly breathing and tensing and releasing your muscles switch on the opposite, the relaxation response. They take a few minutes, work almost anywhere, and get easier with practice. Afterward, note what set it off. If anxiety keeps coming back, sticks around for weeks or gets in the way of your life, that's a reason to talk to a professional.

YOU'LL NEED

- ☐ A place to sit or lie down
- ☐ A notes app or journal
- ☐ A few minutes

DO IT LIKE THIS

- 1 **Sit or lie down.** Put one hand on your stomach and the other over your heart.
- 2 **Breathe in slowly until you feel your stomach rise.** Hold it for a moment. Breathe out slowly and feel your stomach fall. Repeat for a minute or two. Count if it helps you slow down.
- 3 **Still tense?** Try progressive relaxation. Starting with your toes and feet, tighten one muscle group for a few moments, then let go. Work your way up your body one group at a time: calves, thighs, stomach, hands, shoulders, face.
- 4 **Bring your attention to right now.** Mindfulness means actively paying attention to the present moment. Name five things you can see, or focus on your breath. When a thought pops up, notice it and bring your attention back without judging it.
- 5 **Picture somewhere calm.** In guided imagery, you picture scenes linked to calm and try to produce that same feeling in your body.
- 6 **Challenge the thought.** Identify negative, unhelpful thoughts and question them. "Everyone will notice I'm nervous" can become "I'm nervous, and most people are focused on themselves."
- 7 **Afterward, write down what set it off.** Learning your triggers and which techniques work for you can reduce anxiety over time, though it may take trial and error.

Watch out Relaxation is generally safe for healthy people, but some people feel more anxious or have intrusive thoughts during it. If you have a psychiatric condition or a history of trauma, check with your provider first.

DAD NOTE *Breathe out longer than you breathe in. Your body gets the message.*

Full lesson: aptkeys.com/mind/emotional-regulation/calming-anxiety-in-the-moment/

Checked October 2, 2026. Sources: MedlinePlus (National Library of Medicine); National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health; National Institute of Mental Health.