

This manual presents a number of breathing techniques that can be used to manage distress and eliminate self-injury. The examples come from different traditions, including psychology, psychotherapy, social work, and Buddhist meditation. The first four techniques are simpler; after that, the different types of breathing are listed in no particular order. The suggestion is to find a few that are comfortable and useful and to practice those frequently. None will work without practice; all can be helpful tools in reducing and eliminating self-harm behaviors. For all the techniques, it is best to practice for at least 20 minutes three times a week to achieve a beneficial effect.

As Thich Nhat Hanh said,

While we practice conscious breathing, our thinking will slow down, and we can give ourselves a real rest. Most of the time, we think too much, and mindful breathing helps us to be calm, relaxed and peaceful. It helps us stop thinking so much and stop being possessed by sorrows of the past and worries about the future. It enables us to be in touch with life, which is wonderful in the present moment. (1991, p. 11)

Nhat Hanh also stated:

Our breathing is the link between our body and our mind. Sometimes our mind is thinking of one thing and our body is doing another, and mind and body are not unified. By concentrating on our breathing, "In" and "Out," we bring body and mind back together, and become whole again. Conscious breathing is an important bridge. (1991, p. 9)

BREATHING TECHNIQUES

In . . . Out Breathing

As you breathe in, say "in" inside your mind; as you breathe out, say "out" inside your mind. Continue for several minutes.

Comment: This simplest of breathing exercises appeals to many as an introduction **1 through 10 Exhale Breathing**

As you breathe in, say nothing inside your mind; as you breathe out, say "1." Next, as you breathe in, say nothing again, and as you breathe out, say "2." Continue in this manner up to 10, counting only on the exhalations. When you reach 10, return to 1. If you lose count or go beyond 10, return to 1 and start over.

Comment: This is a good alternative introductory exercise to "In . . . Out Breathing." It is more complex and requires more attention; however, it is still quite simple and easily remembered. This technique is 2,500 years old and is often the first taught in various traditions of meditation.

1 through 10 Inhalation and Exhalation Breathing

Start with 1 on the inhalation and continue with 2 on the exhalation, alternating up to 10. Then the breathing continues in reverse: 9 on the inhalation, 8 on the exhalation, back down to 1 and then up again, and so on.

Comment: Many people like this exercise because of its soothing up and down rhythm. It is complicated enough to hold one's attention, but simple enough to support relaxation.

Deeper Breathing

Most of us breathe throughout the day in a fairly shallow way, using only a modest percentage of lung capacity. This exercise involves intentionally deepening the breath. Taking deeper breaths in a calm manner increases relaxation. Alertness is also enhanced as more oxygen reaches the brain. Begin by focusing on your breath. Deliberately slow down the breath and make your "in breath" fuller. Next, as you breathe out, do so more fully; deliberately expel more of the air from your lungs than you normally do. As you practice this exercise, find a comfortable new rhythm for breathing deeply.

Comment: Some people can end up light headed with this type of breathing. Return to normal "shallow" breathing if you start to feel any shortness of breath or other discomfort. With practice, a good rhythm can be found.

Bamboo Breathing

To learn bamboo breathing, see Figure A.1. This breathing technique comes from Sekida (1985). It is called bamboo breathing because bamboo grows in clearly delineated sections, as shown in the figure. The horizontal lines on the chart represent brief pauses in breathing. The long diagonal lines represent long, deep breaths; the short diagonal lines represent short, shallow breaths. More specifically, the breathing begins with two long in-breaths and is followed by two brief out-breaths, then two brief in-breaths. This occurs for five cycles, concluding with four long out-breaths.

Comment: This exercise is complex and requires a good memory and concentration to successfully complete and repeat. People who have persistent trouble with becoming distracted find this exercise quite helpful. When first learning bamboo breathing, it may be necessary to look at the diagram.

This exercise can be too difficult for some. Others initially may find themselves gasping for breath if they are unable to establish a good rhythm. Return to normal, comfortable breathing if you experience shortness of breath or other discomfort. In general, heavy cigarette smokers or asthmatics may have trouble with more complex breathing techniques.

Breathing In, I Calm My Body; Breathing Out, I Smile

This is another breathing exercise from Nhat Hanh (1991). Say the above words recurrently.

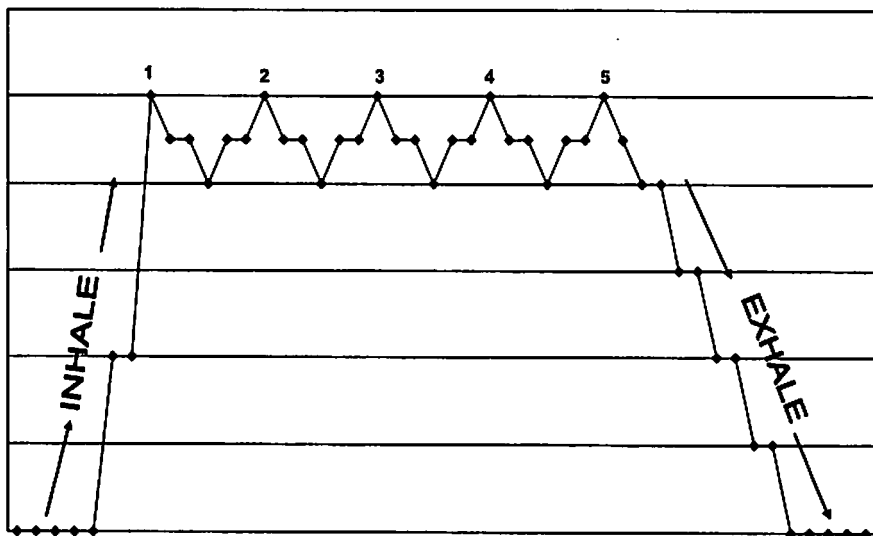


FIGURE A.1. Bamboo breathing.

Comment: He states that smiling relaxes all the muscles in the face and recommends it for this reason.

Letting Go of . . . Breathing

As you breathe in, say: "Mindfully breathing." As you breathe out, say: "Letting go of X . . ." (insert for X whatever you'd like to have less of, such as anxiety, tension, anger, judgments, memories, perfectionism, etc.). You can select one thing to let go of and say that recurrently or you can let go of different emotions with each successive out-breath. The idea is not to "drive out" or forbid any thoughts or feelings, but rather to notice them and then let them go on their way.

Comment: Many individuals identify this exercise as a favorite way to release unwanted, persistent negative thoughts or feelings.

Cultivating . . . Breathing

Same as letting go of . . . breathing, but instead of letting go, you "cultivate" something positive, such as patience, calmness, relaxation, mindfulness, compassion, etc. In this case, breathe out as you say "cultivating," and breathe in as you say "patience," etc. The metaphor is that as you breathe in, the desired state is entering your body and increasing.

Comment: It's usually better to teach this technique after the preceding one, letting go of . . . breathing.

Letting Be, Letting Go, Breathing

This form of breathing comes from Kabat-Zinn (1990). It is designed to assist in dealing with emotions as they emerge. As you become aware of feelings, you say internally:

On the in-breath: Seeing [insert the relevant feeling, e.g., anger, anxiety].

On the out-breath: Letting be.

On the in-breath: Seeing [insert the same feeling name].

On the out-breath: Letting go.

Comment: This exercise indicates that feelings must be encountered and experienced (letting them be). They cannot just be negated, ignored, or repressed. However, at some point, we also need to let them go.

Wave Breathing

This form of breathing was also inspired by Kabat-Zinn (1990). In his "Guided Mindfulness Meditation" recording he uses the phrase, "riding the wave of the breath." I found

this phrase suggestive and used it to create a visualization. As you breathe in, imagine the ocean gently lapping on the beach; as you breathe out, the ocean gently recedes. In imagining the ocean's movement, you can include sight, sound, smell, and touch.

Pleasant Word Breathing

Select a word that appeals to you and repeat it each time you exhale. A colleague of mine, perhaps uniquely, likes the word "onomatopoeia." Others have selected words such as "calm," "ocean," "peaceful," "soothing," "relax," etc.

Breathing with Tapping

Some prefer to make breathing a more active, tactile experience. One way to do this is to gently tap your left finger on your left leg as you breathe in and tap your right finger on your right leg as you breathe out. Decide on a rhythm of tapping that is comfortable for you.

Raised Arm Breathing

A variation of this type of breathing with movement involves sitting with an arm comfortably resting on each leg with the fingertips near the knees. As you inhale, slowly raise both arms up to a comfortable position close to the shoulders; as you exhale return the arms and hands to your legs. Repeat.

Body Scan Breathing

This is a progressive body awareness type of breathing. I learned it from Issho Fujita, a Soto Zen Priest. Begin by bringing your attention gently to the areas of your body that are supported by the chair or floor or cushion. After noticing these sensations, turn your attention to where your feet and legs are supported. After several minutes, shift your attention to focusing on the rise and fall of the abdomen with each in-breath and out-breath. After several more minutes, turn your attention to the rise and fall on the upper chest with each in- and out-breath. After several minutes, bring your attention to the nostrils and become aware of the air going in and out with each breath. You may notice that the air is cooler going in and warmer going out. After several minutes, turn your attention to the full body. Imagine that a single membrane surrounds your body. Imagine that your body is a single cell, a one-celled amoeba. Become aware of the full body. After several minutes of this focusing, the exercise concludes.

Comment: This technique is good for physical grounding and especially helpful for those who are easily distracted, because it provides multiple steps on which to focus.

Pause Breathing

In this exercise you begin by finding a comfortable rhythm of deeper breathing (see above). Once you have this rhythm, concentrate on the gap or pause between the end of the inhalation and the beginning of the exhalation. It is often helpful to deliberately extend the pause beyond its usual length.

Some suggest that this brief moment between breaths symbolizes a break in the constant striving for survival (e.g., taking in oxygen, food, information, expelling carbon dioxide, producing work, speaking to others). It represents an interlude from the effort of balancing inner and outer worlds.

Comment: This type of breathing can produce some unusual thoughts, feelings, insights. However, some find it initially difficult to locate or hold the pause.

Walking Meditation

Nhat Hanh (1975) strongly recommends walking meditation as a complement to meditative breathing in a seated position. Walking meditation involves walking at a slower than normal pace. It also entails focusing on the breath as your body moves through its paces. One way to do walking meditation is to place your right hand on your sternum in a fist with your thumb tucked inside. Then place your left hand over the right, covering it (Issho Fujita, personal communication). As you begin walking, extend your left leg very slowly, touching down first on the heel. Focus quite deliberately on the physical sensations in your leg and foot. Continue focusing as you gradually shift your weight first to the instep and then to the ball of the foot and finally to the toes of the left foot. Continue for the right leg, foot and toes. After several moments, a rhythm is established.

As you are walking, it is useful to synchronize your breath with your steps. One way to do this is take one step for each in-breath and out-breath. However, you should discover your own natural synchrony.

Stoplight or Telephone Breathing

Nhat Hanh (1975) suggests using stoplights or ringing phones as meditation bells that signal brief moments of mindful breathing. This is an excellent way to build some self-soothing and mindful concentration into daily activities.

Return to Health Breathing

Psychologist Cindy Sanderson taught this type of breathing at a DBT intensive in 1999. She reported learning it when she was being treated for cancer. She has since died from a recurrence of the disease, making the second half of the mantra all the more meaningful.

In-breath: "Let me be one with the heart."

Out-breath: "Let me be healed."

In-breath: "Let me be free from suffering."

Out-breath: "Let me be at peace."

Comment: Repetitive phrases, sometimes referred to as mantras, are part of many mindful breathing and meditative exercises. They are both relaxing and focusing.

Empty Mind Breathing

This technique is generally for the more advanced mindful breather. As you focus on your breathing, try to think of absolutely nothing. Release all thoughts, feelings, memories, images, anticipations, sensations. Do and think of nothing.

Comment: To get to a point of an empty mind, one may have to breathe mindfully for extended periods of time.

Distress Tolerance Breathing

Derived from Nhat Hanh (1991), this exercise seems very consistent with the concept of "distress tolerance" from DBT (Linehan, 1993b). The instructions are to say to oneself:

Breathing in, I'm aware of my anger [or whatever feeling].

Breathing out, I'm aware of my anger.

Breathing in, I sit with my anger.

Breathing out, I sit with my anger.

Breathing in, I know my anger will pass.

Breathing out, I know my anger will pass.

Breathing in, I will transform my anger into something positive.

Breathing out, I will transform my anger into something positive.

Comment: As with other exercises, this one can be modified to meet the needs of the individual, that is, simplified, shortened, extended, etc.

Breathing Retraining

This technique is used by Foa and colleagues (Foa & Rothbaum, 1998; Meadows & Foa, 1998) in their treatment of trauma survivors.

As you inhale slowly, you count (silently) to 4. As you exhale slowly, you say the word "calm" or "relax" in a long, drawn-out fashion; for example, *caaalllmmmm*. When the breath is fully exhaled, you pause and count to 4 before inhaling again. Then repeat for at least 10 minutes. This technique is designed to help manage anxiety, calm the body physiologically, and teach mastery over unpleasant emotions.

White Light, Black Smoke Breathing

I learned this technique from Lobsang Phuntsok, a Tibetan monk. As you breathe in, imagine a column of white light entering your body and purifying and cleansing your

thoughts, feelings, habits, and behaviors. Then as you breathe out, envision black smoke leaving your body. This black smoke carries with it all the toxins, negative thoughts, judgments, feelings, behaviors, and habits. This exercise can be simplified by saying to yourself, as you breathe in, "White light, compassion," and as you breathe out, "Black smoke, anger" or "judgments" or "frustration," etc. Phuntsok emphasizes that it is important to visualize the light entering the body and the black smoke exiting the lungs as vividly as possible.

Comment: The metaphoric images of white light and black smoke are especially evocative and therefore appeal to many.

This Too Shall Pass

As you breathe in, say "This too," and as you breathe out, "shall pass."

Just Breathing

With practice, you may find that you get to the point where you just breathe. There is no need for counting, words, phrases, sentences, images, or other techniques. You focus on the breath and just breathe.

DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 2

Guidelines for **Accepting Reality:** **Observing-Your-Breath Exercises**

OBSERVING YOUR BREATH:

Focus your attention on your breath, coming in and out. Observe your breathing as a way to center yourself in your wise mind. Observe your breathing as a way to take hold of your mind, dropping off nonacceptance and fighting reality.

1. DEEP BREATHING

Lie on your back. Breathe evenly and gently, focusing your attention on the movement of your stomach. As you begin to breathe in, allow your stomach to rise in order to bring air into the lower half of your lungs. As the upper halves of your lungs begin to fill with air, your chest begins to rise and your stomach begins to lower. Don't tire yourself. Continue for 10 breaths. The exhalation will be longer than the inhalation.

2. MEASURING YOUR BREATH BY YOUR FOOTSTEPS

Walk slowly in a yard, along a sidewalk, or on a path. Breathe normally. Determine the length of your breath, the exhalation and the inhalation, by the number of your footsteps. Continue for a few minutes. Begin to lengthen your exhalation by one step. Do not force a longer inhalation. Let it be natural. Watch your inhalation carefully to see whether there is a desire to lengthen it. Continue for 10 breaths.

Now lengthen the exhalation by one more footstep. Watch to see whether the inhalation also lengthens by one step or not. Only lengthen the inhalation when you feel that it will give delight. After 20 breaths, return your breath to normal. About 5 minutes later, you can begin the practice of lengthened breaths again. When you feel the least bit tired, return to normal. After several sessions of the practice of lengthened breath, your exhalation and inhalation will grow equal in length. Do not practice long, equal breaths for more than 10 to 20 breaths before returning to normal.

3. COUNTING YOUR BREATH

Sit cross-legged on the floor (sit in the half or full lotus position if you know how); or sit in a chair with your feet on the floor; or kneel; or lie flat on the floor; or take a walk. As you inhale, be aware that "I am inhaling, 1." When you exhale, be aware that "I am exhaling, 1." Remember to breathe from the stomach. When beginning the second inhalation, be aware that "I am inhaling, 2." And slowly exhaling, be aware that "I am exhaling, 2." Continue on up through 10. After you have reached 10, return to 1. Whenever you lose count, return to 1.

DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 2 (cont.)

4. FOLLOWING YOUR BREATH WHILE LISTENING TO MUSIC

Listen to a piece of music. Breathe long, light, and even breaths. Follow your breath; be master of it while remaining aware of the movement and sentiments of the music. Do not get lost in the music, but continue to be master of your breath and yourself.

5. FOLLOWING YOUR BREATH WHILE CARRYING ON A CONVERSATION

Breathe long, light, and even breaths. Follow your breath while listening to a friend's words and to your own replies. Continue as with the music.

6. FOLLOWING THE BREATH

Sit cross-legged on the floor (sit in the half or full lotus position if you know how); or sit in a chair with your feet on the floor; or kneel; or lie flat on the floor; or take a walk. Begin to inhale gently and normally (from the stomach), aware that "I am inhaling normally." Exhale in awareness, "I am exhaling normally." Continue for three breaths. On the fourth breath, extend the inhalation, aware that "I am breathing in a long inhalation." Exhale in awareness, "I am breathing out a long exhalation." Continue for three breaths.

Now follow your breath carefully, aware of every movement of your stomach and lungs. Follow the entrance and exit of air. Be aware that "I am inhaling and following the inhalation from its beginning to its end. I am exhaling and following the exhalation from its beginning to its end."

Continue for 20 breaths. Return to normal. After 5 minutes, repeat the exercise. Maintain a half-smile while breathing. Once you have mastered this exercise, move on to the next.

7. BREATHING TO QUIET THE MIND AND BODY

Sit cross-legged on the floor (sit in half or full lotus position if you know how); or sit in a chair with your feet on the floor; or kneel; or lie flat on the floor. Half-smile. Follow your breath. When your mind and body are quiet, continue to inhale and exhale very lightly; be aware that "I am breathing in and making the breath and body light and peaceful. I am exhaling and making the breath and body light and peaceful." Continue for three breaths, giving rise to the thought, "I am breathing in while my body and mind are at peace. I am breathing out while my body and mind are at peace."

Maintain this thought in awareness from 5 to 30 minutes, according to your ability and to the time available to you. The beginning and end of the practice should be relaxed and gentle. When you want to stop, gently massage the muscles in your legs before returning to a normal sitting position. Wait a moment before standing up.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Training¹

Note: Language should be adjusted according to the child's vocabulary level.

In explaining the rationale, the clinician notes that, "Sometimes with anxiety, a person can experience some breathing discomfort. This usually arises because of an increase in respiration rate (i.e. breathing too fast) that accompanies anxiety. In an actual fight or flight situation, an increased respiration rate is useful, because of increased requirements for oxygen. However, with anxiety, there is no increased oxygen requirement, so the higher rate of respiration is unnecessary. When this rate becomes excessively high, it is called "hyperventilation." Although harmless, hyperventilation can create some discomfort, because it causes the carbon dioxide level in the blood to go down. When the carbon dioxide level goes down, the oxygen in your bloodstream doesn't get to where it's needed that readily. The feelings that result can include breathlessness, light-headedness, and chest discomfort. When people get these feelings, sometimes their immediate inclination is to breath faster or take deeper breaths. However, this only compounds the discomfort because the problem is not a low oxygen level. You have plenty of oxygen; it's just that the carbon dioxide level has gone down, so you don't get the full benefit of that oxygen. The solution is to slow the breathing down, to allow the carbon dioxide level to build back up again."

The clinician can then go on to explain that "comfort is also increased when breathing is done with the diaphragm as opposed to the chest. With chest breathing, it is hard to breath slowly and, also, the chest muscles are strained, leading to feelings of tightness and even pain. Using the diaphragm (the natural way to breathe), in contrast, promotes slower, more comfortable breathing."

The clinician then demonstrates physically the distinction between diaphragmatic and chest breathing. The clinician can place one hand on the chest and one on the abdomen, demonstrating how the chest hardly moves while the abdomen balloons out (with inspiration) and collapses (with expiration). The clinician then has the patient do the same (placing one hand on the chest, and one on the abdomen). Some patients (habitual chest breathers) will have great difficulty duplicating the clinician's movements. In this case, the clinician should continue with the instruction for an additional couple of minutes, but then let the matter ride if further progress proves unlikely during the session. Instead, the clinician can focus on slow breathing, which is the essential factor in controlling hyperventilation and associated anxiety (see below).

Next, the clinician should introduce the concept of slow diaphragmatic breathing by informing the patient that, to counteract hyperventilation, a 6-8 second breathing cycle is recommended (i.e. 6-8 sec from one inspiration to the next inspiration). The clinician can then have the patient practice breathing in, to a count of three, and breathing out, to a count of three. The clinician can

¹Correspondence concerning this protocol should be addressed to Dr. Ethan Gorenstein, Behavioral Medicine Program, Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, 622 W. 168 St., Box 427, New York, NY 10032.

count out loud, raising the palm to the count of three in order to cue inspiration, lowering it to a count of three to cue expiration.

Many patients may be more comfortable slowing down their breathing by pausing for a second or two after they let each breath out. For example, they can take 2 seconds breathing in, and 2 seconds breathing out; then they can pause for 2 seconds before drawing the next breath. The main issue is achieving a respiration rate of about 8-10 breathing cycles per minute, as accomplished by the method that is most comfortable for the patient.

Some patients may have to be cautioned that slow diaphragmatic breathing does not imply deep breathing. Indeed, excessively deep breathing can be part of the problem as it, too, can produce hyperventilation if it leads to a rate of exchange that exceeds physiological requirements. Thus, slowing the breathing down should not be achieved by taking substantially deeper breaths; rather, slower breaths are required. For patients who cannot slow their breathing down without breathing excessively deeply, the method of pausing after expiration may be helpful in slowing their breathing down without increasing the depth of breathing.

As homework after the first training session, the patient is instructed to practice the diaphragmatic breathing for 2-3 minutes, 3 times per day (morning, afternoon, and evening). The first practice can be conducted lying down in bed in the morning (upon awakening is usually convenient); the other two are conducted in a sitting position. The patient can be given the a form for rating his or her comfort level with each practice.

Comment: He states that smiling relaxes all the muscles in the face and recommends it for this reason.

Letting Go of . . . Breathing

As you breathe in, say: "Mindfully breathing." As you breathe out, say: "Letting go of X . . ." (insert for X whatever you'd like to have less of, such as anxiety, tension, anger, judgments, memories, perfectionism, etc.). You can select one thing to let go of and say that recurrently or you can let go of different emotions with each successive out-breath. The idea is not to "drive out" or forbid any thoughts or feelings, but rather to notice them and then let them go on their way.

Comment: Many individuals identify this exercise as a favorite way to release unwanted, persistent negative thoughts or feelings.

Cultivating . . . Breathing

Same as letting go of . . . breathing, but instead of letting go, you "cultivate" something positive, such as patience, calmness, relaxation, mindfulness, compassion, etc. In this case, breathe out as you say "cultivating," and breathe in as you say "patience," etc. The metaphor is that as you breathe in, the desired state is entering your body and increasing.

Comment: It's usually better to teach this technique after the preceding one, letting go of . . . breathing.

Letting Be, Letting Go, Breathing

This form of breathing comes from Kabat-Zinn (1990). It is designed to assist in dealing with emotions as they emerge. As you become aware of feelings, you say internally:

On the in-breath: Seeing [insert the relevant feeling, e.g., anger, anxiety].

On the out-breath: Letting be.

On the in-breath: Seeing [insert the same feeling name].

On the out-breath: Letting go.

Comment: This exercise indicates that feelings must be encountered and experienced (letting them be). They cannot just be negated, ignored, or repressed. However, at some point, we also need to let them go.

Wave Breathing

This form of breathing was also inspired by Kabat-Zinn (1990). In his "Guided Mindfulness Meditation" recording he uses the phrase, "riding the wave of the breath." I found

this phrase suggestive and used it to create a visualization. As you breathe in, imagine the ocean gently lapping on the beach; as you breathe out, the ocean gently recedes. In imagining the ocean's movement, you can include sight, sound, smell, and touch.

Pleasant Word Breathing

Select a word that appeals to you and repeat it each time you exhale. A colleague of mine, perhaps uniquely, likes the word "onomatopoeia." Others have selected words such as "calm," "ocean," "peaceful," "soothing," "relax," etc.

Breathing with Tapping

Some prefer to make breathing a more active, tactile experience. One way to do this is to gently tap your left finger on your left leg as you breathe in and tap your right finger on your right leg as you breathe out. Decide on a rhythm of tapping that is comfortable for you.

Raised Arm Breathing

A variation of this type of breathing with movement involves sitting with an arm comfortably resting on each leg with the fingertips near the knees. As you inhale, slowly raise both arms up to a comfortable position close to the shoulders; as you exhale return the arms and hands to your legs. Repeat.

Body Scan Breathing

This is a progressive body awareness type of breathing. I learned it from Issho Fujita, a Soto Zen Priest. Begin by bringing your attention gently to the areas of your body that are supported by the chair or floor or cushion. After noticing these sensations, turn your attention to where your feet and legs are supported. After several minutes, shift your attention to focusing on the rise and fall of the abdomen with each in-breath and out-breath. After several more minutes, turn your attention to the rise and fall on the upper chest with each in- and out-breath. After several minutes, bring your attention to the nostrils and become aware of the air going in and out with each breath. You may notice that the air is cooler going in and warmer going out. After several minutes, turn your attention to the full body. Imagine that a single membrane surrounds your body. Imagine that your body is a single cell, a one-celled amoeba. Become aware of the full body. After several minutes of this focusing, the exercise concludes.

Comment: This technique is good for physical grounding and especially helpful for those who are easily distracted, because it provides multiple steps on which to focus.

Pause Breathing

In this exercise you begin by finding a comfortable rhythm of deeper breathing (see above). Once you have this rhythm, concentrate on the gap or pause between the end of the inhalation and the beginning of the exhalation. It is often helpful to deliberately extend the pause beyond its usual length.

Some suggest that this brief moment between breaths symbolizes a break in the constant striving for survival (e.g., taking in oxygen, food, information, expelling carbon dioxide, producing work, speaking to others). It represents an interlude from the effort of balancing inner and outer worlds.

Comment: This type of breathing can produce some unusual thoughts, feelings, insights. However, some find it initially difficult to locate or hold the pause.

Walking Meditation

Nhat Hanh (1975) strongly recommends walking meditation as a complement to meditative breathing in a seated position. Walking meditation involves walking at a slower than normal pace. It also entails focusing on the breath as your body moves through its paces. One way to do walking meditation is to place your right hand on your sternum in a fist with your thumb tucked inside. Then place your left hand over the right, covering it (Issho Fujita, personal communication). As you begin walking, extend your left leg very slowly, touching down first on the heel. Focus quite deliberately on the physical sensations in your leg and foot. Continue focusing as you gradually shift your weight first to the instep and then to the ball of the foot and finally to the toes of the left foot. Continue for the right leg, foot and toes. After several moments, a rhythm is established.

As you are walking, it is useful to synchronize your breath with your steps. One way to do this is take one step for each in-breath and out-breath. However, you should discover your own natural synchrony.

Stoplight or Telephone Breathing

Nhat Hanh (1975) suggests using stoplights or ringing phones as meditation bells that signal brief moments of mindful breathing. This is an excellent way to build some self-soothing and mindful concentration into daily activities.

Return to Health Breathing

Psychologist Cindy Sanderson taught this type of breathing at a DBT intensive in 1999. She reported learning it when she was being treated for cancer. She has since died from a recurrence of the disease, making the second half of the mantra all the more meaningful.

In-breath: "Let me be one with the heart."

Out-breath: "Let me be healed."

In-breath: "Let me be free from suffering."

Out-breath: "Let me be at peace."

Comment: Repetitive phrases, sometimes referred to as mantras, are part of many mindful breathing and meditative exercises. They are both relaxing and focusing.

Empty Mind Breathing

This technique is generally for the more advanced mindful breather. As you focus on your breathing, try to think of absolutely nothing. Release all thoughts, feelings, memories, images, anticipations, sensations. Do and think of nothing.

Comment: To get to a point of an empty mind, one may have to breathe mindfully for extended periods of time.

Distress Tolerance Breathing

Derived from Nhat Hanh (1991), this exercise seems very consistent with the concept of "distress tolerance" from DBT (Linehan, 1993b). The instructions are to say to oneself:

Breathing in, I'm aware of my anger [or whatever feeling].

Breathing out, I'm aware of my anger.

Breathing in, I sit with my anger.

Breathing out, I sit with my anger.

Breathing in, I know my anger will pass.

Breathing out, I know my anger will pass.

Breathing in, I will transform my anger into something positive.

Breathing out, I will transform my anger into something positive.

Comment: As with other exercises, this one can be modified to meet the needs of the individual, that is, simplified, shortened, extended, etc.

Breathing Retraining

This technique is used by Foa and colleagues (Foa & Rothbaum, 1998; Meadows & Foa, 1998) in their treatment of trauma survivors.

As you inhale slowly, you count (silently) to 4. As you exhale slowly, you say the word "calm" or "relax" in a long, drawn-out fashion; for example, *caaallllmmmm*. When the breath is fully exhaled, you pause and count to 4 before inhaling again. Then repeat for at least 10 minutes. This technique is designed to help manage anxiety, calm the body physiologically, and teach mastery over unpleasant emotions.

White Light, Black Smoke Breathing

I learned this technique from Lobsang Phuntsok, a Tibetan monk. As you breathe in, imagine a column of white light entering your body and purifying and cleansing your

thoughts, feelings, habits, and behaviors. Then as you breathe out, envision black smoke leaving your body. This black smoke carries with it all the toxins, negative thoughts, judgments, feelings, behaviors, and habits. This exercise can be simplified by saying to yourself, as you breathe in, “White light, compassion,” and as you breathe out, “Black smoke, anger” or “judgments” or “frustration,” etc. Phuntsok emphasizes that it is important to visualize the light entering the body and the black smoke exiting the lungs as vividly as possible.

Comment: The metaphoric images of white light and black smoke are especially evocative and therefore appeal to many.

This Too Shall Pass

As you breathe in, say “This too,” and as you breathe out, “shall pass.”

Just Breathing

With practice, you may find that you get to the point where you just breathe. There is no need for counting, words, phrases, sentences, images, or other techniques. You focus on the breath and just breathe.

Next, think about your breathing. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

With each breath, picture the air going in through your nose and traveling all the way down toward your belly.

When you are ready,
breathe out through your mouth.

As you breathe in,
feel the calm, cool air filling your body.

As you breathe out,
feel the tense, hot air leaving your body.

In... and out.

In... and out.

In... and out.

In... and out.

In... and out.

Five times altogether.

DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 2

Guidelines for Accepting Reality: Observing Your Breath Exercises

OBSERVING YOUR BREATH:

Focus your attention on your breath, coming in and out. Observe your breathing as a way to center yourself in your wise mind. Observe your breathing as a way to take hold of your mind, dropping off nonacceptance and fighting reality.

1. DEEP BREATHING

Lie on your back. Breathe evenly and gently, focusing your attention on the movement of your stomach. As you begin to breathe in, allow your stomach to rise in order to bring air into the lower half of your lungs. As the upper halves of your lungs begin to fill with air, your chest begins to rise and your stomach begins to lower. Don't tire yourself. Continue for 10 breaths. The exhalation will be longer than the inhalation.

2. MEASURING YOUR BREATH BY YOUR FOOTSTEPS

Walk slowly in a yard, along a sidewalk, or on a path. Breathe normally. Determine the length of your breath, the exhalation and the inhalation, by the number of your footsteps. Continue for a few minutes. Begin to lengthen your exhalation by one step. Do not force a longer inhalation. Let it be natural. Watch your inhalation carefully to see whether there is a desire to lengthen it. Continue for 10 breaths.

Now lengthen the exhalation by one more footstep. Watch to see whether the inhalation also lengthens by one step or not. Only lengthen the inhalation when you feel that it will give delight. After 20 breaths, return your breath to normal. About 5 minutes later, you can begin the practice of lengthened breaths again. When you feel the least bit tired, return to normal. After several sessions of the practice of lengthened breath, your exhalation and inhalation will grow equal in length. Do not practice long, equal breaths for more than 10 to 20 breaths before returning to normal.

3. COUNTING YOUR BREATH

Sit cross-legged on the floor (sit in the half or full lotus position if you know how); or sit in a chair with your feet on the floor; or kneel; or lie flat on the floor; or take a walk. As you inhale, be aware that "I am inhaling, 1." When you exhale, be aware that "I am exhaling, 1." Remember to breathe from the stomach. When beginning the second inhalation, be aware that "I am inhaling, 2." And slowly exhaling, be aware that "I am exhaling, 2." Continue on up through 10. After you have reached 10, return to 1. Whenever you lose count, return to 1.

DISTRESS TOLERANCE HANDOUT 2 (cont.)

4. FOLLOWING YOUR BREATH WHILE LISTENING TO MUSIC

Listen to a piece of music. Breathe long, light, and even breaths. Follow your breath; be master of it while remaining aware of the movement and sentiments of the music. Do not get lost in the music, but continue to be master of your breath and yourself.

5. FOLLOWING YOUR BREATH WHILE CARRYING ON A CONVERSATION

Breathe long, light, and even breaths. Follow your breath while listening to a friend's words and to your own replies. Continue as with the music.

6. FOLLOWING THE BREATH

Sit cross-legged on the floor (sit in the half or full lotus position if you know how); or sit in a chair with your feet on the floor; or kneel; or lie flat on the floor; or take a walk. Begin to inhale gently and normally (from the stomach), aware that "I am inhaling normally." Exhale in awareness, "I am exhaling normally." Continue for three breaths. On the fourth breath, extend the inhalation, aware that "I am breathing in a long inhalation." Exhale in awareness, "I am breathing out a long exhalation." Continue for three breaths.

Now follow your breath carefully, aware of every movement of your stomach and lungs. Follow the entrance and exit of air. Be aware that "I am inhaling and following the inhalation from its beginning to its end. I am exhaling and following the exhalation from its beginning to its end."

Continue for 20 breaths. Return to normal. After 5 minutes, repeat the exercise. Maintain a half-smile while breathing. Once you have mastered this exercise, move on to the next.

7. BREATHING TO QUIET THE MIND AND BODY

Sit cross-legged on the floor (sit in half or full lotus position if you know how); or sit in a chair with your feet on the floor; or kneel; or lie flat on the floor. Half-smile. Follow your breath. When your mind and body are quiet, continue to inhale and exhale very lightly; be aware that "I am breathing in and making the breath and body light and peaceful. I am exhaling and making the breath and body light and peaceful." Continue for three breaths, giving rise to the thought, "I am breathing in while my body and mind are at peace. I am breathing out while my body and mind are at peace."

Maintain this thought in awareness from 5 to 30 minutes, according to your ability and to the time available to you. The beginning and end of the practice should be relaxed and gentle. When you want to stop, gently massage the muscles in your legs before returning to a normal sitting position. Wait a moment before standing up.

Diaphragmatic Breathing Training¹

Note: Language should be adjusted according to the child's vocabulary level.

In explaining the rationale, the clinician notes that, "Sometimes with anxiety, a person can experience some breathing discomfort. This usually arises because of an increase in respiration rate (i.e. breathing too fast) that accompanies anxiety. In an actual fight or flight situation, an increased respiration rate is useful, because of increased requirements for oxygen. However, with anxiety, there is no increased oxygen requirement, so the higher rate of respiration is unnecessary. When this rate becomes excessively high, it is called "hyperventilation." Although harmless, hyperventilation can create some discomfort, because it causes the carbon dioxide level in the blood to go down. When the carbon dioxide level goes down, the oxygen in your bloodstream doesn't get to where it's needed that readily. The feelings that result can include breathlessness, light-headedness, and chest discomfort. When people get these feelings, sometimes their immediate inclination is to breath faster or take deeper breaths. However, this only compounds the discomfort because the problem is not a low oxygen level. You have plenty of oxygen; it's just that the carbon dioxide level has gone down, so you don't get the full benefit of that oxygen. The solution is to slow the breathing down, to allow the carbon dioxide level to build back up again."

The clinician can then go on to explain that "comfort is also increased when breathing is done with the diaphragm as opposed to the chest. With chest breathing, it is hard to breath slowly and, also, the chest muscles are strained, leading to feelings of tightness and even pain. Using the diaphragm (the natural way to breathe), in contrast, promotes slower, more comfortable breathing."

The clinician then demonstrates physically the distinction between diaphragmatic and chest breathing. The clinician can place one hand on the chest and one on the abdomen, demonstrating how the chest hardly moves while the abdomen balloons out (with inspiration) and collapses (with expiration). The clinician then has the patient do the same (placing one hand on the chest, and one on the abdomen). Some patients (habitual chest breathers) will have great difficulty duplicating the clinician's movements. In this case, the clinician should continue with the instruction for an additional couple of minutes, but then let the matter ride if further progress proves unlikely during the session. Instead, the clinician can focus on slow breathing, which is the essential factor in controlling hyperventilation and associated anxiety (see below).

Next, the clinician should introduce the concept of slow diaphragmatic breathing by informing the patient that, to counteract hyperventilation, a 6-8 second breathing cycle is recommended (i.e. 6-8 sec from one inspiration to the next inspiration). The clinician can then have the patient practice breathing in, to a count of three, and breathing out, to a count of three. The clinician can

¹Correspondence concerning this protocol should be addressed to Dr. Ethan Gorenstein, Behavioral Medicine Program, Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center, 622 W. 168 St., Box 427, New York, NY 10032.

count out loud, raising the palm to the count of three in order to cue inspiration, lowering it to a count of three to cue expiration.

Many patients may be more comfortable slowing down their breathing by pausing for a second or two after they let each breath out. For example, they can take 2 seconds breathing in, and 2 seconds breathing out; then they can pause for 2 seconds before drawing the next breath. The main issue is achieving a respiration rate of about 8-10 breathing cycles per minute, as accomplished by the method that is most comfortable for the patient.

Some patients may have to be cautioned that slow diaphragmatic breathing does not imply deep breathing. Indeed, excessively deep breathing can be part of the problem as it, too, can produce hyperventilation if it leads to a rate of exchange that exceeds physiological requirements. Thus, slowing the breathing down should not be achieved by taking substantially deeper breaths; rather, slower breaths are required. For patients who cannot slow their breathing down without breathing excessively deeply, the method of pausing after expiration may be helpful in slowing their breathing down without increasing the depth of breathing.

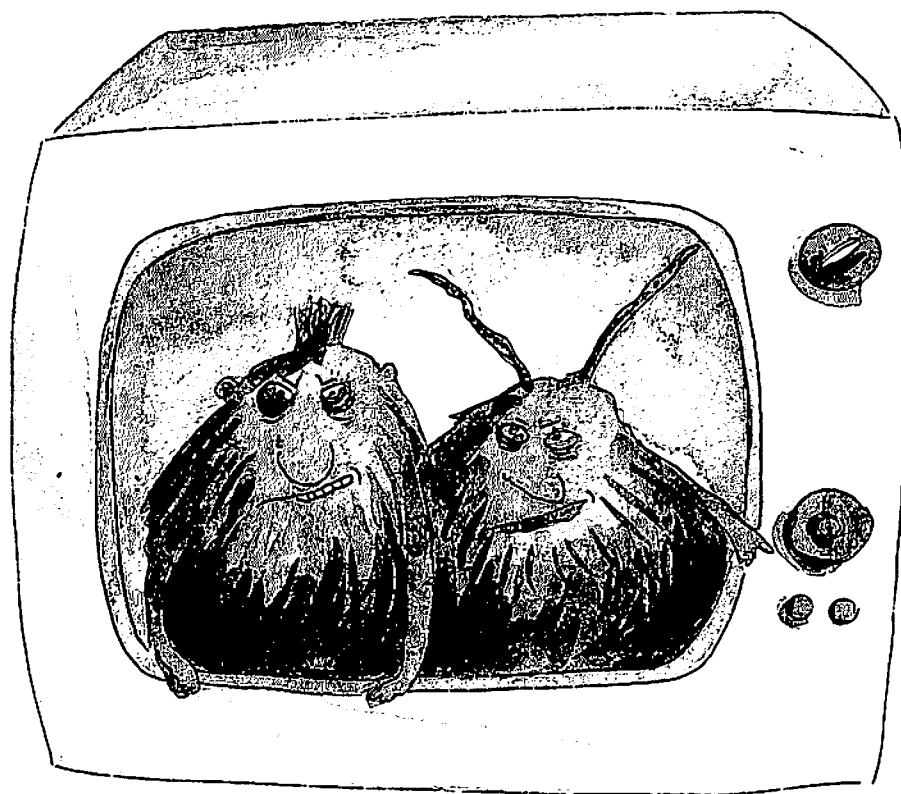
As homework after the first training session, the patient is instructed to practice the diaphragmatic breathing for 2-3 minutes, 3 times per day (morning, afternoon, and evening). The first practice can be conducted lying down in bed in the morning (upon awakening is usually convenient); the other two are conducted in a sitting position. The patient can be given the a form for rating his or her comfort level with each practice.

Now that your body is ready, let's think about your brain. When you're worried, thoughts about the worry take up all of the room in your mind. These worry thoughts keep you feeling bad, even if you have already tried to relax your body.

People might tell you to just not think about the worry, but as you know, that is really hard to do. It's like the worry is being shown on a giant-screen TV in your brain. You can't not watch!

But, you **CAN** change the channel.

You already know how to change the channel on a real TV. Now you're going to learn how to change the channel in your mind.



Begin by choosing a memory.



Choose one of your most special memories. You probably have a few. Special memories are usually from happy times, when you were having lots of fun or when you succeeded at something that was hard. Maybe you hit a triple in a softball game. Maybe you got to choose your dog from a whole litter of squirming puppies.

Think of a memory that makes you feel really good inside. Remember as many details as you can. What were you wearing? How did the air smell? What could you hear? How did you feel? What did you see?

When you practice remembering your special memory, you'll notice that the memory makes you feel better. Just thinking about your favorite memory will help you feel the way you felt that day. It takes practice, but soon you'll notice that you don't just remember feeling happy or excited or proud, you actually feel that way.

And guess what? Feeling happy or excited or proud crowds out the worry! It changes the channel off a worry station and onto one you'd much rather be watching.

Set aside five minutes each day to practice this quiet way of re-setting your system. In the beginning, practice at a time when you aren't busy worrying.

Get your body ready by tightening and relaxing your muscles. Breathe deeply five times (remember to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth). Then picture your favorite memory in as much detail as you possibly can.