

# Relax Anywhere, Anytime

by '*Focusing on breathing*'

"Moronically simple, yet works like a charm" says a practitioner.

## How can I do it?

**(A) Tip mode:** Touch the tip of the thumb to the tip of the little finger. Breathe in and out *three times*, counting in the mind, every time you breathe out. During the first out-breath, count 'one', second out-breath 'two', third out-breath 'three'. Repeat the 3 breaths, at each of the next 3 finger tips. When you are at the thumb, place the tip of the index finger at the base of the thumb and breathe 3 times. Then switch to the other hand and repeat the same practice. Continue practicing switching the hands.

**(B) Segment mode:** Every finger has two cross lines, dividing it into three parts or segments. Place the tip of the thumb at the top segment of the little finger. Breathe in and out once. Move the thumb to the middle segment and breathe in and out. Move to the bottom segment and breathe in and out. Repeat the same steps at the next 3 fingers. At the thumb, place the tip of the index finger on its segments and follow the same steps. Then switch to the other hand and repeat the process all over. Continue practicing, switching the hands.

*Triple segment mode: Breathe three times at each segment, everything else remaining same.*

**(C) Counting mode:** While breathing in normally, feel the *faint cool sensation* inside the nose and on the top lip. While breathing out, count *slowly* in the mind. First out-breath, count 'one....', second out-breath 'two....' and third out-breath 'three....'. Then repeat the same sequence: count 'one....' during the next out-breath and so on. Continue counting the breaths, in sets of three, as long as you like. Every time your mind wanders and you lose track of the breaths, count 'one....' during the next out-breath and get back to the practice.

**(D) Feeling mode:** When breathing in, feel the faint coolness inside the nose. When breathing out, feel the faintly warm or neutral sensation. You can also place a hand on your abdomen and focus on its slight expansion and contraction, as you breathe in and out. Don't use fingers. Don't count.

**(E) Staring mode:** Select a small but prominently visible spot, mark or object, before you, as the target. While continuously staring at it, practice any of the above modes.

**(911)** Breathe in through the nose or mouth quickly. Keep your lips almost closed but for a tiny opening at the center. Blow out air gently through this tiny opening, like blowing air through a straw. Focus on the cool sensation at the lips. In this mode, the outgoing breath is restrained at the lips, making the air flow out slowly, for a longer time.

**Children:** Adults need to show them with a few initial sessions. Children from 9 years can practice all the above modes. 5 – 8 year olds can practice modes (A) to (C). 4 year olds can practice the Tip mode (A). For even younger children, ask the child to breathe only once, at each finger tip. Depending on the receptivity, increase it slowly, to twice and then thrice.

Practice the above modes eyes closed for better effect, except for the staring mode (E).

## When Can I Practice?

**When you need to sleep:** Begin this new practice of 'focusing on breathing' when you lie down in bed, eyes closed. Start practicing the 'segment' mode. When you feel sleepy, switch to the 'counting' mode. When you feel more sleepy, switch to the 'feeling' mode. See the amazing power of this simple method for inducing sleep. No more insomnia or sleep medications!

**As soon as you wake up:** Continue lying in the bed, eyes closed. Turn your body in different positions, be still in each position and breathe in A, B or C mode, for some time. Turn right, be still and breathe, turn left, be still and breathe, lie on your chest, be still and breathe, lie on your back, be still and breathe. Sit up cross legged on the edge of a pillow, back straight, hands in your lap and breathe. Leave the bed, stand on the floor and breathe. Walk out of your bedroom, feeling fresher than before. Build up your reserve of calmness every morning and become stress-proof. Then, the day time stresses will not impact on you.

**Home:** Routine activities like walking, cooking, cleaning, gardening etc. do not require much thinking. These are great opportunities for relaxing in any mode. See how many breaths it takes for the repetitive activities: toast the bread, fill the cup, load the laundry etc.

**Walking:** To develop this practice, walk slowly, using the 'counting mode'. While breathing in, feel the coolness inside nose. While breathing out, every time a foot touches the ground, match it with the number being counted. Repeat that number, till the out-breath ends. (an example: during the first out- breath, one-one-one...so on)..After some practice, walk at the normal pace. In a few weeks, you can practice even while running or on the tread mill!

**Waiting:** Whenever you wait, like waiting for breakfast, lunch or dinner, computer to load, standing in a line, sitting at the doctor's office etc., you get bored and restless. Use these great opportunities and get a little relaxed, by practicing one of the modes.

**Traveling by Car /Bus /Train/Plane:** Practice any mode. Enjoy a fatigue free journey.

**Driving:** Whenever you stop at the red light, keep staring at the red light and practice one of the modes. This is more relaxing than looking at the moving streams of cars, signs and people!

**Work Place:** When you walk in the parking lot or the hallway, practice the walking mode. When your mind wanders, any part of your body feels tight or you feel stressed, take a break for a few seconds by practicing one of the modes. Breathe out the stress and feel refreshed!

**Pain:** If the pain is acute, practice the (911) mode 8 to 10 times. Alternate it with other modes, till it eases. For chronic pains, lie down on the back, legs spread out wide and hands by your side. Practice the triple segment mode for 30 - 45 minutes. This deeply relaxes the tight and painful muscles. Follow up with gentle and slow stretching of the affected muscles, using your choice mode. Breathe in while stretching and breathe out during the return movement. Repeat this practice every day. This will gradually reduce the need for pain pills.

**Playing games:** Practice any mode when waiting for the ball to reach you, feeling frustrated or angry on losing. Get back your focus on the game.

**Exercise:** Practice on the tread mill in any mode (A) to (D). When doing weights or resistance training, breath out through the mouth, with a 'haa' during the strenuous movements. Breathe in, deeply, during the light return movement.

**Under stress:** When angry, anxious, panicky or in pain, use the (911) mode, till you feel some relief. Alternate (911) with other modes till the crisis eases.

# Testimonials - Children

“One of the ways we **help children cope with stress** at Robert C. Parker School is by practicing the simple mindful breathing taught us by C.S. The breathing technique is practiced regularly by almost all the children in the school.”  
Meg Taylor, Head of Robert C. Parker School at Wynantskill NY.

## 2 years

“I have a 2 year old daughter who would constantly toss and turn all night and come morning time she was absolutely miserable. I tried 'counting breaths' method with her. To my surprise the next day, it seemed like I woke up a completely differently little girl. **She was much happier and more co-operative with me** than the previous mornings. I also tried this method with her time outs when she misbehaved. Once again to my surprise **within a few moments, she would become much calmer and more relaxed.**” Mother: Tara Wescott

## 9-15 years

\* “I count my breaths when I am mad at my sister (4 year old), **so I don't punch her**” Boy 9 years.

\* “I count my breaths in car, in bed in the morning, and when in **angry mood**. It **prevents being car sick, get active and awake and calm down.**” Boy 9 years.

\* “I count my breaths in bed, on the bus and when bored. It helps me **calm myself when mad and in concentrating**” Girl 12 years.

\* “Counting my breaths **helps me think about things and not be bored.**” Boy 10 years.

## Adults

**Anger:** These practices have improved my self control, reduced my anger and increased my tolerance for things out of my control. I don't have anxiety or chest pains or tightening, that I frequently had before. My road rage is reduced. I think before I react. I am able to deal better with 'difficult customers' which helped me in my job and career” A call center person. More reports in the web site\*.

**Anxiety:** See Dr. Padma Sripada's comments in the box on the next page.

**Asthma:** One boy of 10 years was under daily medication for controlling his asthma. Over a few months of practicing this technique at bed time, he could significantly reduce the frequency of medication. After about 2 years, his doctor told him that he need not see him monthly but could visit once in 6 months due to the improvement in his asthma.

**Cancer survivors:** Breast cancer survivor: “The 'Counting breaths' technique helps me during chemotherapy. I do it every day - at bed time and on waking up lying, to relax my mind and body. I enjoy great sleep. I also do it during my stretching exercises, watching TV, walking, reading, and any other time.” An oral cancer survivor has been using the technique while undergoing several surgeries. He uses it while watching the TV and bed time.

**Concentration:** “I came to know about your 'counting breaths' method from a brochure I found at the Albany Hindu Temple. I am preparing for USMLE exam due in August 09 and I am really tensed at the moment. I have been practicing the method since 2 days and I am really feeling very much relieved of my stress. And **I am able to concentrate better on my studies**” A student preparing for Medical Residency Exam in USA .

**Dental Work:** The mother of a 10 year old boy said happily “My son was terrified of getting any dental work done. I had to postpone his visits several times. After I learned 'Counting Breaths', I taught this method to him at home and made him practice for a few days. When he was sitting in the dentist's chair, I sat beside him and continuously said 'breathe, breathe ... '. For the first time, he had his **dental visit without the usual panic**”.

**Depression:** “This technique helped me tremendously. Seven years ago I lost my daughter and I went into a deep depression and chronic anxiety, in spite of medications. I started to use the breathing technique and I got to say it was very helpful. For the first time in 7 years, I feel my depression has lifted.” A woman aged 70 years,

**Hypertension:** Whenever a woman visited her doctor, her blood pressure was showing very high. She learned the relaxation techniques in my classes and was determined to get over this problem. One day, she went to the doctor's office well ahead of time and practiced counting breaths for about 20 minutes. **For the first time, the doctor found her pressure normal.** She reported this with a beaming face. Reports in the web site\*.

**Infertility treatment:** Two couples with a history of many years of unsuccessful treatments for infertility succeeded after reducing their stress individually and between them by practicing this technique. The specialist showed one woman how the **weak hormones improved dramatically** over a period and made the treatment successful. Reports in the web site\*.

**Insomnia: This is the most reported benefit. Whoever tried it, are able to sleep easily, from 5 years to 90+.** See Dr. Sripada's comments inside the box on this page, on how it helps even chronic insomniacs, avoid medications.

**Job Stress:** The principal and vice principal of a school, with about 1000 students, were in a lot of tension due to harassment, from parents pressing them for admissions, improvement of marks, etc. After they started practicing this method, their response to the situation totally changed. **They were able to listen to the parents patiently and send them off with a smile.**

### **Migraine**

A 53 year old person was suffering from migraine pains for 30 years. Within 2 months of practicing the method, his migraine totally stopped and did not recur. **He initially practiced the method for mental comfort, without expecting any relief from migraine. This benefit came as a pleasant side effect! Reports in the web site\*.**

### **Obesity**

The senior librarian of the local library said he was practicing this technique mostly at bed time and enjoyed good sleep. **He also lost 15 pounds.** Asked how did it happen, he put both his index fingers at his temples and said "It is all here!". Reports in the web site\*.

**Panic Attacks:** See Dr. Padma Sripada's comments in the box below.

**Pains (Chronic):** "I was suffering from **back pain** for 20 years and was hospitalized 2 times. I was taking pain relievers as there was no other option. After I practiced the breathing and stretching techniques, my pain is reduced by 80%" Another report: "These breathing techniques helped me sleep better and reduced my **Fibromyalgia** pains that I was suffering since last 19 years. Now I am able to do my chores at home like vacuuming and also drive after a gap of many years!". Reports in the web site\*.

### **Quitting Smoking**

"I was smoking a pack a day. After just a week of doing practicing the method, once in the morning and right before bed, I cut smoking down to around 15 cigarettes a day, by just doing this method. I now practice it throughout the day and **I am down to about 4 cigarettes a day.** I am more relaxed. I don't need to lash out at everybody when I become edgy. I didn't use any gum or patches; **I did it on my own!** Reports in the web site\*.

### **Relationships**

"After practicing these techniques, I am much more relaxed and calmer. My family life has changed dramatically. My daughter and I now talk without yelling at one another. My husband has calmed down his attitude around me." A woman

### **Smiling Face**

The grim non-smiling faces of the practitioners gradually change to a softer and **happy smiling look**, over a few months. Reports and photos in the web site\*.

### **Stuttering**

A 55 year old person was **stuttering for more than 40 years.** After he practiced the technique for about two months, his speech showed some improvement. In about 9 months, it was 90% normal. Reports in the web site\*.

### **Recommended by Doctors**

"A simple, no expense, meditation-oriented approach to **stress reduction** which we recommend for all our patients (and ourselves!) is nicely presented at the following website: [www.countingbreaths.com](http://www.countingbreaths.com). Try it; you'll be glad you did!"

Peter Horvath MD, FACOG. Recommended in his web site 'www.albanyivf.com'

"The 'focusing on the breath' technique is appealing in its simplicity, and absence of restrictive conditions that often hamper the adoption of most techniques of meditation. I have introduced the technique to some of my patients with **anxiety, panic attacks, hypertension and insomnia.** Everyone who has adopted the technique has reported that it helps them relax. Some patients have reported it has helped them **sleep better, and no longer rely on medications.** The most remarkable effect was on a patient with **severe panic attacks**, who could not drive over a bridge without taking an anxiolytic medicine first. She is now able to drive over bridges **without relying on medications!**"

Padma Sripada MD Internal Medicine [www.doctorpadma.com](http://www.doctorpadma.com)

**Suryanarayana Chennapragada (Short name – CS) trains adults and children in simple, doable mindbody techniques for Relaxation, Stress management and Meditation. Convenient times and affordable charges.**

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