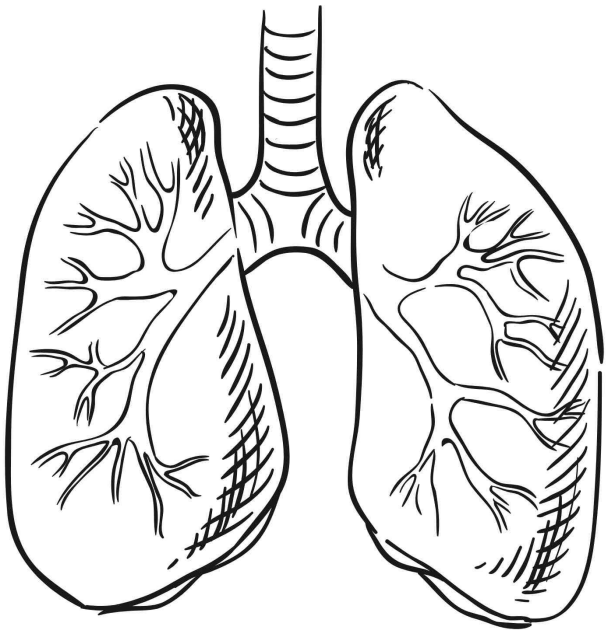
The Physiological Sigh



Instructions

1. Take 1 deep in-breath through your nose (*through your nose is preferred, but you can breathe through your mouth if needed*).
2. Without exhaling, take one more in-breath, filling your lungs even more.
3. Exhale in an extended fashion, mouth open.
4. Repeat as needed.

The Importance of Sighing

Sighing is crucial to the functioning of the lungs. If you did not sigh, your lungs would deteriorate. Believe it or not, we sigh roughly every 5 minutes, and it is often with the same pattern of a double inhale and long exhale used in the physiological sigh. Think about the last time you had a hard cry, or when you were really stressed. Your sigh likely followed this pattern.

The “physiological sigh” optimizes the natural stress-relieving process of sighing to help you consciously manage your anxiety. When you are able to calm your body, your mind will follow.

It doesn’t matter what your mind is doing, your body will slow down and you will be calmer.

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Why the Physiological Sigh Works for Anxiety

As with most breathing techniques, the physiological sigh works by requiring you to redirect your attention, and by activating your parasympathetic nervous system through the lengthening of your out-breath. However, the physiological sigh is unique in that contains the additional feature of allowing you to consciously utilize the normally non-conscious process of sighing to relieve stress. *Here's how it works:*

You see, there are millions of air-filled sacs in your lungs called alveoli. Throughout your day, these sacs gradually collapse, filling your bloodstream with carbon dioxide. When you get stressed, these sacs collapse even quicker.

Now, a normal breath is not enough to refill these sacs. The deep in-breath contained in a sigh is necessary to do this, which is why you sigh every 5 minutes. As you sigh throughout the day, you are constantly refilling these sacs with new oxygen and releasing carbon dioxide from your bloodstream. Since a lot of what you're feeling when you are stressed or anxious is a heightened level of carbon dioxide in your bloodstream, you can see how this process would affect your level of stress.

The physiological sigh allows you to consciously use this process to manage your anxiety and optimize its effects. By taking 2 in breaths during the physiological sigh, you are filling these sacs up with as much oxygen as you possibly can. Then, when you exhale in an extended fashion, you are able to more effectively cleanse your blood stream of carbon dioxide, reducing the anxiety or stress you are experiencing.

To review, the physiological sigh works by:

1. Extending your out-breath and slowing the rate of your breath, activating your parasympathetic nervous system (makes you calmer).
2. Allowing you to consciously refill the air-sacs in your lungs and cleanse your bloodstream of anxiety-inducing carbon dioxide.
3. Redirecting your attention towards your breath instead of the anxiety provoking thoughts you are having.

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