

7-11 Breathing

What is it?

7-11 is a proactive and reactive breathing exercise which will help you to quickly regain a sense of calm during difficult situations. When used regularly it will help to generally keep your stress levels low and is particularly useful during times of ongoing pressure such as exams.

How is it Used?

There are 3 stages to this technique.

Stage 1

Make sure that you are breathing into your stomach.

- Begin by standing with your feet shoulder width apart
- Place both hands on your stomach
- Imagine that there is a balloon inside your stomach and give it a colour
- As you breathe in deeply, imagine the breath going into the balloon and filling it up
- As you do this you will feel your hands moving as your stomach expands.
- As you breathe out imagine the balloon deflating and feel your hands moving back

Stage 2

Counting.

- As you breathe in, silently count to 7
- Hold hold for a count of 2
- Breathe out to the count of 11
- Repeat for between 30 seconds and a minute
- As you do this remember to keep the breath going into your stomach

If at any time you feel yourself becoming light headed then just allow your breathing to return to normal.

Stage 3.

Once you can hold the pattern without counting, try saying the word 'calm' or 'relaxed' to yourself as you breath out. You can also experiment by slowing your counting down and allowing your breathing rate to follow.

When to Use It.

This exercise works very well to reduce general stress levels. To do this practice using it 3 times a day.

1. **Early in the morning.** This helps to calm you and prepare you for the day ahead.
2. **Around lunchtime.** This will clear your mind from anything that may have bothered you during the morning and prepares you for the afternoon.
3. **In the evening, especially just before bedtime.** This allows you to shake off any stress that has built up over the day and prepares you for a good nights sleep. After sleeping well you will wake feeling more refreshed. Then, after doing your morning breathing you will feel really good and you begin your day on a positive cycle.

Making it Part of Your Day.

This technique is also very good at calming you in the moment. If at any time you begin to feel a little stressed or under pressure, taking a few breaths in the 7-11 pattern will quickly return a sense of balance.

If you're in a public place then it's not always convenient to stand up or put your hands on your stomach. Although it's good practice to keep doing this when you can, taking deep breaths without using your hands, or even while sitting down, will still be beneficial.