**Experimental conditions**

There are four different experimental conditions:

* *VR-Breathing+Mystical*: The VR-based slow-paced breathing application is designed to provide rewarding biofeedback for a specific breathing pattern characterized by prolonged exhales. As users extend their exhales, a veil of fog gradually lifts, introducing a mystical experience. Over time, users are rewarded with a full 360-degree panoramic view of the beautiful nature scene, accompanied by relaxing music. After 7 minutes of prolonged exhales, the nature scene responds to the user's breathing by slowing down, with falling snowflakes moving more slowly, further enhancing the mystical atmosphere. This intervention was designed to be visually captivating, mystically evocative, and emotionally engaging.
* *VR-Mystical*: Users will experience the gradual unveiling of a beautiful natural landscape as the fog lifts, and eventually, the scene slows down. However, this application does not provide any biofeedback or breathing instructions. Users are invited to passively observe the unfolding experience, immersing themselves in the environment for 10 minutes. Relaxing music accompanies the scene. The condition relies solely on the immersive and aesthetic qualities of the virtual environment to potentially induce relaxation.
* Non-VR-Breathing: In the minimal breathing intervention, participants will be instructed to follow a slow paced breathing pattern guided by a simple visual cue (an expanding and contracting circle) displayed on a computer screen for 10 minutes. This condition is designed to guide slow-paced breathing without incorporating any rewarding elements or virtual reality components. The circle follows a pattern of 4 seconds of inhalation and 7 seconds of exhalation, based on the average breathing behavior observed in a pilot trial with 10 participants, corresponding to the breathing pattern in the VR condition.
* *VR-Control*: In the control condition, participants will watch a neutral documentary for 10 minutes in VR (Nicht von Pappe – Wie Papier hergestellt und recycelt wird | Die Nordreportage | NDR Doku). This condition is used to control for the effects of the immersive VR experience. It does not include any components related to guided breathing or mystical content, or any form of rewarding elements.