

Psychomotor Activity

Psychomotor Objective: By the end of this demonstration, learners will be able to replicate a deep breathing technique used to decrease the negative effects of the body's stress response.

When you're stressed, your whole nervous system reacts and releases specific hormones (adrenaline and cortisol) into your blood stream. These hormones speed up your heart rate, respiratory rate, increase blood pressure and metabolism ("Burnout," 2018).

This can be a good thing as changes in your body as a result of stress can increase your ability to feel:

- Alert
- Aware
- Energized
- Motivated
- More resourceful

However, long-term stress is exhausting, and can prevent you from taking part in activities that you normally find meaningful. This is called emotional burnout and can lead to physical burnout ("Burnout," 2018).

The American Institute of Stress (AIS) has identified a simple way to reduce stress by stimulating a relaxation response (Marksberry, 2012).

The relaxation response:

- Decreases metabolism
- Slows your heart beats and relaxes your muscles
- Slows breathing
- Decreases blood pressure
- Increases levels of nitric oxide; Nitric oxide is a free radical that expands the blood vessels, increasing blood flow and decreasing plaque growth and blood clotting

Most of us think of relaxation as lying on the couch or sleeping, but instead it is a mentally active process that leaves the body relaxed, calm, and focused (Marksberry, 2012).

Deep Belly Breathing

Belly breathing is easy to do and very relaxing. Do this basic exercise anytime you need to relax or relieve stress (Marksberry, 2012).

1. Sit or lie flat in a comfortable position.
2. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest.
3. Take a deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should not move.
4. Breathe out through pursed lips as if you were whistling. Feel the hand on your belly go in, and use it to push all the air out.
5. Do this breathing 3 to 10 times. Take your time with each breath.
6. Notice how you feel at the end of the exercise.

NOW YOUR TURN!

Taking regular “time outs” and practicing deep breathing techniques can reduce the stress response, be done in any moment, and allow you to take control of your stress and lead a healthy mental lifestyle (Burgess, Romito, Husney, & Maldonado, 2017).

References

Burnout and chronic stress (2018). Retrieved from <https://au.reachout.com/articles/burnout-and-chronic-stress>

Burgess, P., Romito, K., Husney, A., & Maldonado, C. R. (2017, October 10). Stress Management: Breathing Exercises for Relaxation. *Michigan Medicine: University of Michigan*. Retrieved from <https://www.uofmhealth.org/health-library/uz2255>

Marksberry, K. (2012, August 10). Transforming stress through awareness, education and collaboration: Take a Deep Breath. *The American Institute of Stress: Daily Life*. Retrieved from <https://www.stress.org/take-a-deep-breath/>