

## BREATHING IN THE NOW

### Read these instructions before listening to the audio program

Shifting into a state of relaxation will mitigate inordinate stress associated with any chronic or acute issue which creates emotional and/or physical frenzy.

When stress levels go up, you can break into the stress cycle by setting aside time every day to 1) breathe freely and 2) clear your mind. The combination of these two things is effective and empowering and is self-care at its best.

This audio program supports the Relaxation Response (RR), pioneered by Dr. Herbert Benson at Harvard Medical School over 30 years ago. This field-tested process involves coordinating your breathing with mental focus on a word, phrase or prayer. It is much easier to follow my voice than to stay focused on your own. This recording will transition you to a place where you can practice the RR on your own.

If you purposefully engage in the process of relaxation on a daily basis, your body will crave this antidote to stress.

### THE PROCESS

1. See to it that you are physically comfortable, both in your posture and in your clothing. You might want to take off your shoes. If you are very tired, you might fall asleep, especially if you are lying down. If that happens, presume that you need the rest. However, the purpose of this is to develop the skill of bringing serenity to yourself with conscious awareness. Therefore, it is best to plan this so that you can actively learn to use this to reverse the physiology of stress while awake.
2. To begin, select a word, phrase or prayer that you associate with serenity or positivity.
3. Take a gentle but full cleansing breath in slow motion. The structures of the mid-brain interpret this as if you are saying to yourself “all is right with the world.” You will be telling your body by way of your breath that “this time is for me, and nothing else matters.” You should feel something shift immediately. If you do not feel a shift, try another slow and generous inhalation or two.
4. Rest in the rhythm of your breathing for a brief while, without forcing anything, just following your breath.

5. Start the audio program and let the words carry you until you get to a blank space that lasts about 30 seconds.
6. During this time, use the *word* that you have selected and *say it to yourself in your mind on the exhale*. If you have selected a *phrase or prayer*, say **half** of it to yourself on the inhale and the **other half** on the exhale. This gives you the opportunity to practice the Relaxation Response.
7. Listen to the rest of the program and when it ends, bring conscious awareness to your breath and continue coordinating your word, phrase or prayer with your breath as described above.

The tape should launch you into the Relaxation Response easier than if you had tried to do it alone.

*It is normal to have trouble keeping your mind focused.* Do not judge yourself harshly and do not give up. *Let go of the intrusion or loss of concentration and return to your word, phrase or prayer and your breath.*

This may not feel like the right coping strategy for everyone. Give it a chance. *But please contact me if you feel you need a different approach.* It is important that you **not** think of this as something at which you’ve failed, or that you’re doing it wrong. Call me for a 20 minute free consultation so we can experiment with some other approach that might resonate better with you.

For those of you who might feel intensely stressed, it might feel unnerving to achieve a state of relaxation. This is because of the unfamiliarity of it. The more you persevere, the more you teach the unnerved part of yourself that to be relaxed may be new, but it is acceptable.

It is very important to know that *resistance to finding the time for this is normal. Resistance to doing it is normal as well.* Do not give up.

In addition, keep in mind that at any time during the day, one deep breath can be a powerful stress reducer. Or, you can take a minute or two and coordinate your breathing with counting. For instance, you can count up to ten and exhale on each number. Or, inhale counting from 1 to 4 and exhale counting from 4 to 1. You can invent breathing exercises according to your own whimsy. The important thing is that you take your mind off of your upset and feed your body oxygen. By so doing, you learn to empower yourself by returning your body to neutral with the full Relaxation Response or with these “mini” ones.