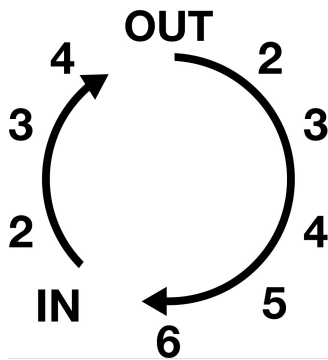


This is the breathing pattern we can use to switch on our natural relaxation system. There are lots of variations on this basic pattern so feel free to experiment a bit and work out what is best for you. The information given below is a good starting point for many of us. Do read through **all** of the information at least once before you start practicing.

Breathe IN for a count of 4 and OUT for a count of 6



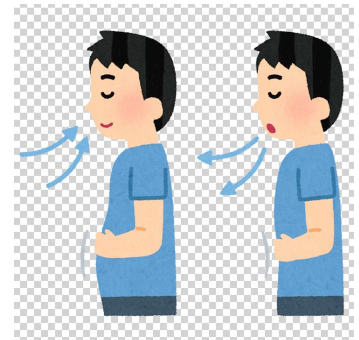
Take your time, especially breathing out

Everyone has their own most relaxing pace of breathing so the 4 and 6 can be faster, or slower, as you wish.

If you are feeling stressed when you start it can be helpful to start at a faster pace and let the breathing gradually slow down over time.

6 breaths a minute is often a good speed, so you could try **either** counting in time with the second hand or the ticking on a standard battery-powered clock **or** you can use the old trick of saying ‘mississippi’ to yourself between each number: “1 mississippi 2 mississippi 3 mississippi” ... and so on

Once you feel comfortable with the speed of your counting and breathing, then you can **allow the muscles in your shoulders, chest and belly to relax** a little each time you breathe out. As this happens your belly will naturally start to ‘expand’ as you breathe in. For some people this takes a while to happen, so you can be relaxed about that too. There are a few tricks people have found over the years to help with this: see [Belly Breathing](#).



It is important to remember that these are not BIG breaths.

Relaxed breathing is **gentle, slow** and **into the belly**. One very deep breath right at the beginning can help sometimes, but after this big breaths could just make you feel dizzy and ill.

If you feel dizzy just remember to move less air in and out each time, or slow the breathing down, or take a break and practice again later.

To find out more about different ways of using this basic breathing technique to deal with different situations, including **panic**, there is more detail in [Using the Breath](#)

How long will it take to get fully relaxed?

This can vary a lot, but usually from between 2 - 3 minutes, through to 20 minutes.

People who are very stressed can find that just a couple of minutes of breathing will have a small effect but it quickly wears off. Remember it takes 20 - 30 minutes for most anxiety drugs to work and antidepressants take several days to kick in. The longer you practice the more confident you can become, the longer that calmer feeling will last, and the easier you can use this breathing at any time you need to.

This is why practicing for **at least** 10 minutes once a day is a really good idea, and 20 minutes is even better.

People have found many ways to make this 10 - 20 minute time to focus on the breathing. The apps **BreathingZone** and **Breath Ball** are both good because they are quite flexible. There is information on which settings to use on these apps [here](#), along with information on a simple visualisation for those that don't have a smart-phone.

Follow [this link](#) for free audio files to help you spend up to 20 minutes relaxing with the breath at a pace that suits you, with a background of real birdsong and flowing water sounds.