



Graduate Student Orientation

“Navigating Your Roles: Self-Care and Wellness” Breakout Session Sample Exercise

1. Set a timer for 5 minutes and start playing some relaxing music (i.e. “white noise”).
2. Sit in a chair with feet flat on the floor, hands in your lap, and back straight.
3. Close your eyes.
4. Breathe in as deeply as possible while counting to 4 slowly in your mind. Exhale slowly while continuing the count to 8. Repeat this inhalation and exhalation five times, counting to 4 for inhalation and 8 for exhalation. Then allow your breath to return to normal.
5. Now, focus your mind on each of the following parts of your body and let go of any tension there might be in each place by imagining that you are breathing through that spot starting at the top of your body: • Your forehead • Your eyes • Your face, and jaw • The back of your head, your scalp • The base of your head • Your neck • Your shoulders • Your arms • Your hands • Your rib cage, let it drop let your breath go in and out more smoothly. • Your pelvis, legs, knees, lower legs and feet • Make sure your feet are relaxed and resting on the floor. If your mind starts to wander, that is okay. Direct your thoughts back to your body.
6. Now that your body is relaxed, use the remaining time to simply focus on your breath. Pay attention to how the breath feels as it goes in and out. When your mind begins to wander, let go of whatever thought is there and focus once more on your breath. Do this until the timer goes off. Don’t worry if your mind wanders a lot. This is natural. The more you practice this exercise, the more you will find that you are able to keep your mind focused upon your breath for longer periods of time.

Suggestions

- For the greatest benefit, do this exercise three times a day. Or, if you can’t find the time, do it at least once a day, especially before sleeping. It will greatly enhance the quality of your sleep.
- Also try it as a study break when you find your mind beginning to lose focus or when you are getting too tired to concentrate.
- If you tend to get bad test anxiety, do this exercise before taking any test. Remember, stress can mess up our ability to concentrate.

*Adapted from A.T. Still University (2014). “A 5 Minute Relaxation”. Retrieved from http://www.atsu.edu/counseling_services/resources/pdfs/five_minute_relaxation.pdf on August 3, 2014.