

Sigh Away!

Purpose

- Reduce stress.
- Enhance awareness of the mind-body connection.
- Calm the body.

Materials

- None

Get Grounded

A 2023 Stanford University study found that when people did “cyclic sighing” breathwork for five minutes each day for four weeks, they felt less stressed, calmer, and in better moods.

Get R.E.A.L.

Follow these steps:

1. Sit or stand in a comfortable position.
2. Inhale through your nose. Hold for one or two seconds, and then...
3. Take a second, deeper breath. Expand your chest as you fill your lungs. Hold for a few more seconds, and then...
4. Release all the air through your mouth in a long, slow sigh. This should take about double the time as both inhales.
5. Repeat the cycle. Continue this pattern for about five minutes.

Teaching Tips & Modifications

- In face-to-face sessions, suggest learners change how they're sitting or where they're standing. They could sit down if they're standing or stand up if they're sitting. You can also have them gather in a circle. While they may like to close their eyes, don't make it a requirement, as some people who've been through trauma might not feel comfortable.
- For digital sessions, encourage learners to adjust their screen position or posture for comfort and focus. They may also feel more comfortable turning their cameras off but leaving their audio on.
- Consider playing calming background music or soothing sounds like wind chimes, nature melodies, or gentle earth sounds to change the mood of the environment.
- Hand out the learner downloadable found here. <hyperlink> Encourage learners to keep it with them to remind them of the steps.
- Challenge learners to include cyclic sighing in their daily routine, perhaps suggesting two or three times a day.

CYCLIC SIGHING

CASEL Competency:

Self-Management/Identifying and using stress-management strategies

Arkansas Department of Education G.U.I.D.E. for Life Relevant Objectives:

- Grades K-2: Identify emotions that I am feeling and identify ways to calm myself when in a stressful situation.
- Grades 3-5: Identify and develop techniques to calm myself when in a pressure situation.
- Middle/Junior High School: Analyze how thoughts and emotions affect decision making and responsible behavior
- High School: Practice strategies for coping with and overcoming stress and negative feelings (e.g., rejection social isolation)

Make it Your Own

- Lead brief sighing sessions at the start and end of a class or school day if you have students at different times. You might also initiate a session before a test or project period to help learners relax and focus.

Reflection

- How did you feel before and after cyclic sighing?
- What changes did you notice in your body and thoughts during the activity?
- How could you use cyclic sighing in your daily life?
- How could you remember to use cyclic sighing at different points in the day?

References

Bergland, C. (2023, January 23). [How Longer Exhalations and Cyclic Sighing Makes Us Feel Good](#). *Psychology Today*.

Legget, H. (2023, June 2.) [Breathing anxiety away](#). *Stanford Medicine Magazine, Psychiatry and Mental Health (Issue 2)*.