

## BREATHING EXERCISES

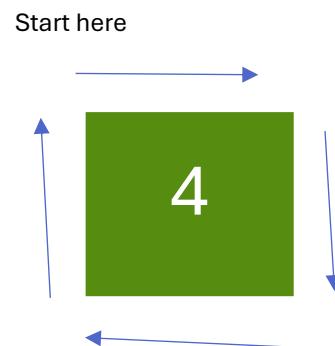
### OVERVIEW

When we are stressed or tense (even a little bit), we tend to hold our breath, or to breathe less optimally (fast and more shallow), which increases our anxiety. Learning to control our breathing helps to slow our heart rate, in turn this helps to improve our oxygen flow, which allows us to think more clearly and to reassure our body that we are safe, helping us to relax.

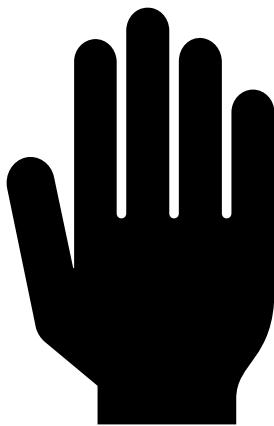
The two simple breathing exercises here have been specifically chosen as they are easy to adapt for use during a busy shift.

### BOX BREATHING

Imagine breathing around a box or square shape (you can also visualise or trace around your phone or notepad whilst you do this exercise). Start at the top and breathe in for a count of 4, hold your breath for a count of 4 whilst you move down the right-hand side, breathe out to a count of 4 across the bottom and hold to a count of 4 going up the left side. Repeat the exercise up to 4 times if comfortable.



## FINGER TRACE BREATHING



Hold a hand out in front of you (under your desk, or by your side if you want to be more discrete). Use the index finger of your other hand to trace along each finger, slowly breathing in as you trace up the length of the finger and slowly exhaling as you trace down. Swap hands and repeat, so that you have completed 10 slow deep breaths.

## WHAT IF BREATHING EXERCISES DON'T WORK FOR ME?

Sometimes you might feel a little dizzy when you start to do these exercises, this is because you are breathing more deeply and taking on more oxygen. Sitting or lying down to practice these exercises might be beneficial until you become more accustomed to them.

If you have breathing-related issues, focussing on your breath may be uncomfortable, if this is the case you might find grounding techniques more useful (see our Grounding Exercises leaflet).

## NEED MORE HELP?

If you would like to find out more about anxiety management techniques you can access several resources via the Employee Assistance Programme, Vivup at <https://vivup.yourcareeap.co.uk>

Alternatively, if you wish to access support for anxiety you can self-refer to Vivup by calling 03303 800658 24/7.