

# THE BREATHING CONTEST™

Rus Devorah (Darcy) Wallen, LCSW, ACSW

***FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS BELOW AS CLOSELY AS YOU CAN FOR GREATEST BENEFIT.***

*This exercise helps in an array of situations. Firstly, it's an easy, inexpensive, time "free" technique for calming the body. "A calm body cannot contain anxiety." When practicing the Breathing Contest™ regularly it can lower one's blood pressure and heart rate, respiration (obviously) and metabolism. It diminishes negative stress hormones such as cortisol and epinephrine/norepinephrine, and brings in relaxation and "happy hormones." There are additional benefits such as not getting out of breath running, going up and down stairs, exercising, etc. It literally doesn't need to take time out of one's schedule and can be done virtually anywhere... What's amazing is that you can even practice this when you're in public, (without the counting element – see below\*). Practice doing this wherever and while doing whatever, as long as you don't need to speak. The more you practice this exercise, the more benefits you accrue.*

**ADVANCED TECHNIQUE CHALLENGE:** Do the Breathing Contest intentionally when you need to do something very quickly or energetically such as: running, riding a bike quickly, etc.

## Here's How You Do It 😊

1. Breathe slowly in through your nose and then slowly back out with your mouth.
2. Keep slowing it down and "have a contest with yourself" as to how slowly (but comfortably) you breathe.
3. Create a small aperture with your mouth (i.e., a small "oo" or "oh") to let the air (CO<sup>2</sup>) out even slower. (If you're in public, use this manner of making your mouth opening smaller. When you're in private, try using an "F" or "S" and hiss out the CO<sup>2</sup> even slower than with a small aperture of the mouth.)
4. Keep slowing down the breath
5. Try to make sure the exhalation is always longer than the inhalation. (Since there is always residual CO<sup>2</sup> in the system, you can never exhale enough. Additionally, you always want to bring in more oxygen (O<sup>2</sup>) to the system, so by exhaling more CO<sup>2</sup> you create more space for O<sup>2</sup> to be brought in.)
6. \* When in private, count inside your head how many beats/counts your inhalation is, then count your exhalation. Consider this one "cycle".
7. As you develop a comfortable rhythm, count the cycles (how long is the inhalation, and how long the exhale - i.e., in 4 seconds, out 6 seconds), and try to have a "contest with yourself" to keep extending your breath sustenance.