

## 3 – 6 BREATHING EXERCISE

### OVERVIEW

The following exercise is to be used in conjunction with our book, “*What Is PTSD? 3 Steps to Healing Trauma*” or the “*Trauma Recovery Program*” Online. For the best results use this exercise in conjunction with the book or the online program. Please visit [www.WhatIsPTSD.com](http://www.WhatIsPTSD.com) for additional resources.

### GOAL

At the start of this exercise, it is best to focus all your attention internally and if possible, it is preferable to begin with your eyes closed. When you are focusing on your breath, sit or lie in a relaxed position where you are comfortable and will not be disrupted. Please note that a full breath is considered an inhalation and exhalation.

### MATERIALS AND LAYOUT

Pen or pencil, timer, and the form we have provided on the following pages.

### TIME OUT

Do not try the *3 – 6 Breathing Exercise* if you have any respiratory problems. Instead, choose a different exercise in this section until you are safely able to work with your breath.

Also, always reflect on your inner state and notice if you need a break from the exercise to find your inner calm.

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**PATH TO COMPLETE**

**1. Noticing**

Begin by noticing the pace, depth, and movement of the breath as you take three inhalations and exhalations (three breaths). Notice if the breath is deep, shallow, fast, slow, smooth, and rough and how it feels moving in and out of the body. After three breaths make a note of whether the breath was smooth/rough; deep into the belly/shallow into the chest; slow/fast. Capture your response below:

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**2. Deepening**

Begin by noticing that you can make the breath deeper, smoother, and slower just by focusing your attention on this task. Take three breaths again, being careful not to hold your breath at any time. When you get to the edge of a full inhalation (do not go beyond that as it will strain the body), begin to exhale, not overworking the body at any time. Bring the breath deep into the belly on the inhalation and release the breath completely on the exhalation, letting the body rest for a beat at the end of the ex-halation before inhaling again. At the end of the third exhalation stop and make a note of what it feels like to deepen, slow and smooth out the breath. Capture your response on the following page:

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**3. Sipping**

Now you will work with a sipping breath by “imagining that there is a straw in your mouth and you are inhaling through that straw very slowly and smoothly (you will need to form your lips into an “o” shape – notice you can bring the breath deep into your belly. At the edge of the inhalation begin to exhale through the nose. Do not hold or force the breath. Do this three times and make a note of what it feels like to breath in this way. Capture your response below:

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4. **Counting:**

In this part of the exercise, you will learn to lengthen your exhalation until it eventually becomes twice as long as the inhalation. To start with, we focus on inhaling to the count of three (you can count silently in your mind) and exhale to the count of six, pausing at the end to let your body relax. For most people, you will lengthen the exhalation over time starting with a count of three on the inhalation and reaching four, five, or six on the exhalation. The idea is not to try too hard but to let the exhalation lengthen over time with a pause to relax before taking the next breath. Continue by inhaling slowly fully and deeply into the belly to the count of three and release slowly and completely to the count of four, five or six, while staying focused on the slow full rhythm of inhalation and exhalation. Do this five times and make a note of how you feel when you are done. Capture your response below:

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