

## PACED BREATHING EXERCISE

### OVERVIEW

The following exercise is to be used in conjunction with our book, “*What Is PTSD? 3 Steps to Healing Trauma*” for best effect. Please visit [www.WhatIsPTSD.com](http://www.WhatIsPTSD.com) for additional resources.

### GOAL

The *Paced Breathing Exercise* is excellent to use if you are struggling with a current issue, difficult thoughts you want to share with others, or upsetting details you need to practice speaking about (like our client, who managed to testify in court using this exercise, or our other client, who used this approach to enable her to speak at a close friend’s funeral).

### MATERIALS AND LAYOUT

Pen or pencil, timer, and the form we have provided below.

### TIME OUT

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. Begin by identifying something that you wish to speak about but recognize the difficulty you have in sharing this story or expressing your experience or perspective. In brief, what is it you want to share?

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2. What makes it difficult to express?

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3. Spend 10 minutes (use a timer) to write out the event (or details to share) in as much detail as possible, as if you will be reading it to an audience.

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4. After 10 minutes of writing, ask yourself, "Is there anything else that needs to be said about the event?" If yes, spend another 10 minutes (timed) adding more detail.

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5. Continue adding increments of 10 minutes until you have written all that needs to be expressed about the event.

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6. Add Paced Breathing to the exercise. Practicing the *3 – 6 Breathing Exercise* creates a good foundation for paced breathing. You can use the *3 – 6 Breathing* or follow the next instruction.

7. Take a slow deep inhalation until you can feel the belly, chest and back body fill with air. Do not over work the inhalation. At the edge of a full deep inhalation, begin to exhale. On the exhalation, read your story until the exhalation is complete. Pause for a moment to let the body and mind rest.

8. Then take another full deep breath – not rushing either the inhalation or exhalation and only speaking on the exhalation.

9. Now work with paced breathing (or *3 – 6 Breathing*) to read through the story out loud. Follow the instructions above.

10. You can do this repeatedly until you notice a lightening of your mood or an evident lowering of your anxiety.

If you cannot achieve a lowering of anxious feelings or reduction in emotional upset, then move on to the Self-Relaxation exercise to settle yourself back down to the state of inner calm for which we are all hardwired.