HOW FEELINGS AFFECT BREATHING AND VICE VERSA

Normal breathing: Involves taking in oxygen (O_2), which our bodies use and turns into carbon dioxide (CO_2), which we then breathe out. When we are relaxed, and our breathing is steady, the levels of O_2 and CO_2 are balanced.

Exercising: Even though our rate of breathing increases, levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide remain balanced. This is because the body is working harder and therefore using up more O_2, and releasing more CO_2.

Anxious breathing: Similarly to when exercising, our breathing rate increases. However, because the body doesn't need the extra oxygen, as it isn't exerting that much energy, the levels of CO_2 and O_2 become unbalanced. This can cause us to feel dizzy or light headed and sometimes even chest pains.

Relaxed breathing can help rebalance the levels of O_2 and CO_2 and get us back to normal breathing, and resultantly, helps reduce feelings of distress.

Relaxed breathing: Make sure you are in a **comfortable position**, whether that's sitting or lying down. You can also close your eyes if you feel comfortable. Try to breathe **in through your nose** and **out through your mouth**.

Breathe in to a count of 4, pause for a moment, and breathe out to a count of 4.
Breathe in....2...3...4....Hold… 1…Out...2...3....4......

If possible, **focus your breathing lower down in your belly** and not high up in your chest. Check this by putting your hand on your stomach and seeing if it moves when you breathe in.

Keep your breaths slow, smooth, steady and continuous.

Try breathing in this way for a **few minutes** at a time – it may take some time for the balance to be restored. If you can, try and **aim for 5-10 minutes** of relaxed breathing.

Remember to **practice**! Although it may seem easy – relaxed breathing may take some time to get the hang of. Try and practice **three times a day if possible.**