Controlled Breathing Reset

NEW YORK STATE | Office of Mental Health

New York State Trauma-Informed Network & Resource Center

ABOUT THIS TOOL

Audience
Onsite Construction and Utility Workers

Description
This breathing exercise helps calm your body, lower stress, and clear your mind so you can return to work safely and stay focused.

When to Use

- Before starting a high-risk task (heights, confined spaces, heavy equipment, electrical work)
- When the job feels rushed or behind schedule
- After a disagreement with a coworker or supervisor
- When noise, heat, cold, or long hours are wearing you down
- When you notice you're losing focus or making small mistakes
- Before driving home after a long shift

WORKPLACE STRESS

Stress is a normal reaction in the body and mind when we face challenges or feel threatened. In small amounts, stress can actually help you stay focused and do your best. But when stress lasts a long time and you don't get enough rest, it can affect your mood, thinking, immune system, and overall health.

For Construction and Utility workers, the situation can be even harder. Often construction and Utility workers must deal with strong emotions, emergencies, and ongoing pressure. Over time, this can lead to burnout.

THE PRACTICE

1. Breathe in slowly through your nose for **4 seconds**
2. Breathe out slowly through your mouth for **6 seconds**
3. Repeat for about **1 minute**

WHY THIS HELPS

Construction and utility work require attention, coordination, and quick decisions. Stress and fatigue can slow reaction time and increase the chance of mistakes. Taking one minute to breathe can help reset your focus so you can work safely and think clearly.

WHY THIS WORKS

Slow breathing helps your body calm down by sending signals to your brain that you are safe. When you breathe in slowly and then breathe out even more slowly, your heart rate begins to slow down. Your muscles relax, and your mind becomes less busy. This can lower feelings of stress, worry, or frustration.

Taking a minute to focus on your breathing also gives your brain a short break. It helps you step away from whatever is overwhelming you. When you return to your work, you may feel more clear-headed and ready to think. Slow breathing can make it easier to focus, solve problems, and stay in control of your emotions.

Resources:
Find additional wellness information on the NYS Trauma Informed Network and Resource Center at traumainformedny.org
Looking to go deeper? Explore BREATH-BODY-MIND™ (BBM) for weekly breathwork practice, expert tips, and a welcoming community. Check out the website here for additional details.

Source:
Ma X, Yue Z-Q, Gong Z-Q, Zhang H, Duan N-Y, Shi Y-T, Wei G-X and Li Y-F (2017). The effect of diaphragmatic breathing on attention, negative affect and stress in healthy adults. *Front. Psychol.* 8, Article 874.