

## Useful techniques

Below you will find some relaxation techniques the client can use to help let go of the stress and anxiety often experienced on the fertility journey and during infertility treatment.

### 7-11 Breathing

This technique utilises a natural biological relaxation process (increasing the amount of carbon dioxide you breathe in) as well as bringing your mind to the present moment. Focusing on your breathing brings you back to the 'here and now' rather than time travelling to the future worrying about the next pregnancy test or fertility treatment outcomes. The importance of this technique is the emphasis on extending the exhalation which will increase relaxation and help balance the autonomic nervous system.

- Simply concentrate on your breathing and count from 1-7 as you breathe in and from 1-11 as you exhale.
- You can count out loud or in your head but if possible out loud can make it more effective.
- It doesn't need to be big breaths, just normal relaxed breathing adjusting the pace of the counting to your breath.
- Alternatively you can count from 1 to 3 and 1 to 5 instead of 7 & 11 if it is easier.
- After 10-15 breaths you may start to notice how much more relaxed you're beginning to feel.
- If your mind wanders just bring it gently back to your breath. The beauty of this exercise is that you can do it any time, any place without anyone knowing what you are doing.

### Special Place

Find somewhere comfortable and quiet where you will not be disturbed.

- Close your eyes and focus on your breathing for a minute or so.
- Then picture the most relaxing place you could imagine going to, whether it be somewhere you have been to before or somewhere you could imagine going to.
- You can make this place whatever you want it to be.
- Let your imagination go. Just let yourself go there, noticing what you notice when you are there.
- What about the place makes it so relaxing for you? Is it what you can see, hear, feel or what you are doing?
- Be aware of the detail that makes the difference.
- Spend as long as you want exploring this place, soaking up the things about it that are so relaxing for you.
- Take a photograph of this place in your mind so that you can return to it more quickly when you next want to.

### Mind Relaxation

- Close your eyes and focus your attention on your breath for five breaths.
- Now move your awareness to your mind. Begin to be aware of your thoughts, without judgment.
- Notice how your thoughts come and go. Just like clouds passing.
- Notice the speed of your thoughts.

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- Are they positive or negative?
- In whatever way you imagine it, imagine each thought passing through and away or floating away or settling like a snow globe – whatever comes to your imagination.
- Begin to slow the thoughts down in whatever way you imagine doing that. Slow your mind and thinking down perhaps by beginning to focus back on your breath.
- Start to count as you inhale and exhale. Noticing the length of each. Continue to count your breath for 10 minutes.

## Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a practice that comes from the Buddhist tradition. It is a state of observation and awareness that allows you to appreciate the here and now. Mindfulness connects you with the present moment. It reconnects you with simple pleasures. For some it may work as a reminder that the world is more than just 'trying to have a baby' and can increase feelings of relaxation.

How to engage in mindful activity:

- Give all of your attention to whatever it is you are doing: it could be something as simple as walking or washing the dishes.
- Do it slowly.
- Fully experience the physical sensations.
- Focus on allowing each of your senses to take in the surroundings.
- Become aware of all the details via your senses.
- When thoughts intrude on your awareness, gently return your focus on the sensations, smells, sounds and sights.
- Remain in a state of non-judgement.
- Simply allow yourself to receive the moment.