

Space for your own notes

A 10-point plan to help you cope with breathlessness

1. Position yourself comfortably.
2. Have cool air in your face – use a fan or open a window
3. Take sips of cold water or sharp fruit drinks – these may make your throat feel clearer.
4. Practice relaxed breathing control (see breathing control leaflet).
5. Listen to music you find relaxing or a relaxation tape or watch TV.
6. Wear loose clothing.
7. Relaxing massage for the neck and shoulders can be helpful, possibly using appropriate aromatherapy.
8. Use the calming hand or whatever else helps when you start to feel anxious or panicky.
9. When walking on the flat, breathe out for two steps and in for one step, or out for four and in for two, depending on the suitable rate for you. When walking on the slopes or up stairs remember not to hold your breath. Try to breathe rhythmically in time with your steps.
10. Try to relax your muscles so that they work with you rather than against you.

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Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice



Managing Breathlessness

A strategy to help you control feelings of panic and loss of control

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The purpose of this leaflet is to introduce a way of controlling feelings of panic and managing breathlessness.

When you are short of breath it can make you worried. This in turn can make you more breathless. In this situation some people find that they become very anxious or even panic.

Sensations of panic might include:

- Tingling sensation in your hands.
- Light-headedness.
- Fast or difficult breathing
- Palpitations.
- Sweating.
- Dry mouth.
- Feeling out of control and frightened.

The calming hand is a strategy you can use to remind you how to cope when you experience panic or feel out of control.

Calming Hand

There are five steps (or fingers) to understanding the calming hand.

Step 1 – Thumb

Recognition

Recognise your signs of panic EARLY and take the following steps to regain control.

Step 2 – Index Finger

Sigh out

As you do, relax your shoulders and arms.

Step 3 – Middle Finger

Breathe in slowly.

Step 4 – 4th Finger

Breathe out slowly.

Step 5 – Little Finger

Stretch and relax your hand.

Sometimes just hand stretching is enough to help when you are starting to panic.

Repeat these steps until you feel calmer.

You could cut out and keep the calming hand diagram to keep in your purse or wallet to remind you.

