Paced Breathing

When we experience stress, our sympathetic nervous system activates. As a result, you may notice your heart rate and blood pressure increase. Your breathing is likely to become shorter, faster, and shallower as the body tries to get as much oxygen in so it can function optimally and overcome the threat.

Before, during, or after a stressful event, you can choose a behavior that communicates to your brain that you are safe and not under attack or pressure. Paced Breathing is a technique that you can use to activate the sympathetic nervous system's counterpart, the parasympathetic nervous system.

Instructions:

1. Begin by noticing your belly. Often, your breath doesn't fully fill the belly. When under stress, this is very common. Breath deeply, filling your belly with air. Continue to breathe deeply, filling your belly throughout the practice.

2. Shift your attention to your inhale. Notice how your nostrils cool slightly as air enters your nose. On your next inhale, begin to count slowly to 3.

   Inhale – 3 – 2 – 1

3. Release the breath with control as you count slowly down from 6. Try to breath slowly enough that you have air left in your lungs when you reach 1.

   Exhale – 6 – 5 – 4 – 3 – 2 - 1

4. Continue to breath in for a count of 3 and out for a count of 6. Focus on filling the belly with air and a slow controlled exhale.

Tiffany Wentz Ma, LMHC
www.PacificCrestConsults.com