

4 In · 4 Out · 6 Hold

PURPOSE

This breath is your “calm me down + I’m safe” pattern.

It is here to help you:

- Shift your body from fight-or-flight into rest-and-digest.
- Help your system feel safe with gentle pauses in the breath.
- Soften that tight, “I can’t get a full breath” feeling that comes with anxiety.

DESCRIPTION

Inhale for 4 · Exhale for 4 · Hold for 6 (at the end of the exhale)

How to do it:

1. Get comfy – sit or lie down, feet supported, shoulders soft.
2. Inhale gently through your nose for a count of 4.
3. Exhale through your nose (or softly through your mouth) for a count of 4.
4. At the end of your exhale, pause and hold for up to 6 counts, if comfortable

BENEFITS

For your body:

- Slows your breathing down to a softer rhythm,
- Helps your heart rate and blood pressure to settle.
- Gently builds CO₂ tolerance, which can reduce sensations of air hunger, chest tightness, and the urge to over-breathe when you are anxious

For your mind and emotions:

- Helps quiet the inner alarm.
- Gives your “wise adult” part of the brain more space.
- The 4–4–6 rhythm gives your mind a gentle focus, keeping you present instead of spiralling.
- Over time, it can gently retrain the brain so “a little breathlessness” doesn’t automatically equal panic.

IDEAL FOR

A daily nervous-system hygiene practice
A reset after stress - An evening wind-down - Between tasks
A longer-term support for anxious breathing

SAFETY

The breath should never feel like a fight and the hold is a gentle pause, not a test or a challenge.

If you feel dizzy, trapped, or more anxious:

- Let go of the hold right away.
- Breathe normally.
- Look around the room and name a few things you can see or feel to ground yourself.

In the very intense first minute of a panic spike, start softer and skip the hold until your body starts to settle.

If you have low tolerance to CO₂, or a history of panic around holding your breath: Shorten the hold to 2–3 counts, or skip the hold completely until you feel safer.

If you are pregnant, or have heart or lung conditions or unstable blood pressure, check in with your healthcare provider before working with longer breath-holds.