



B.C. SEARCH & RESCUE ASSOCIATION

CRITICAL INCIDENT STRESS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

Calming Down

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During the course of an average day, many of us find ourselves in anxiety-producing situations. Our heart rates increase, our stomachs may become upset, and our thoughts may race uncontrollably through our minds. It is during such episodes as these that we require fast-acting relief from our stressful reactions. The brief exercise described below on this page has been found effective in reducing most of the stress reaction that we suffer from during acute exposures to stressors - in effect, a quick way to "calm down" in the face of a stressful situation. The basic mechanism for stress reduction in this exercise involves deep breathing. The procedure is as follows:

STEP 1 - Assume a comfortable position. Rest your left hand (palm down) on top of your abdomen. More specifically, place your left hand over top of your navel. Now place your right hand so that it comfortably rests on your left. Your eyes should remain open.

STEP 2 - Imagine a hollow bottle, or pouch, lying internally beneath the point at which your hands are resting. Begin to inhale. As you inhale imagine that the air is entering through your nose and descending to fill that internal pouch. Your hands will rise as you fill the pouch with air. As you continue to inhale, imagine the pouch being filled to the top. Your rib cage and upper chest will continue the wave-like rise that was begun at your navel. The total length of your inhalation should be 3 seconds for the first week or so, then lengthening to 4 to 5 seconds as you progress in skill development.

STEP 3 - Slowly begin to exhale - to empty the pouch. As you do, repeat to yourself the phrase "My body is calm." As you exhale you will feel your raised abdomen and chest recede.

For more information: www.bcsara.com/cism