

# 16 Improving your breathing

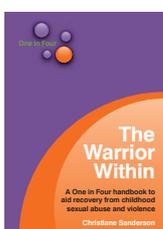


If you are working through *The Warrior Within*, this exercise and further useful information to help you in your recovery can be found on page 66.

To help you restore control and to soothe and calm you, it is important to be able to breathe effectively. A common response to anxiety and fear is to breathe too quickly or shallowly. As we take in less oxygen the body begins to panic. This trips the alarm system, which heightens physical and psychological arousal and fear responses. The lack of oxygen also causes dizziness and shakiness which only serves to increase your panic.

An antidote to fear and panic is to breathe more slowly and more deeply to increase the intake of oxygen. Learning to breathe deeply will help to soothe and calm your fear and panic responses.

To improve your breathing you need to breathe slowly and deeply down into your diaphragm. It will help if you put your hand on your diaphragm, which is just above your navel, so that as you breathe your hand is pushed up and down. Count to five as you breathe in and five as you breathe out. Repeat this five times holding each breath for three counts. Monitor how you feel when you breathe more deeply and to what extent it calms and soothes you. Practise this until you feel confident in breathing more deeply.



The content of this exercise sheet is based on *The Warrior Within: A One in Four handbook to aid recovery from childhood sexual abuse and violence* by Christiane Sanderson

**To order your copy, click the book cover**

© Christiane Sanderson and One in Four

**One in Four**  
219 Bromley Rd, Catford SE6 2PG  
Telephone 020 8697 2112  
Email [admin@oneinfour.org.uk](mailto:admin@oneinfour.org.uk)  
[www.oneinfour.org.uk](http://www.oneinfour.org.uk)

Registered charity number 1081726