

THREE MINUTE BREATHING EXERCISE

Goal: Decrease stress levels and improve team interaction in meetings

Teams that perform in a highly unpredictable and fast-paced environment can experience increased levels of stress. Mindfulness is an attitude with a focus on increasing awareness by paying attention to the present moment. In a study with 8 teams from three organizations, den Heijer et al. compared three teams that performed a three minute breathing exercise right before a meeting to two teams that listened to music and three teams in the control group. They found a significant increase in the self-rated effectiveness, decision-making and team interaction in groups that carried out the breathing exercise.



How can I use it?

The three minute breathing exercise is a tool you can employ at the start of team meetings to refocus your attention on the present situation and improve interaction with other team members. Each step takes about one minute. It is important to create a safe team environment, so that team members feel comfortable during the exercise.

- 1 Become aware.** Sit up straight (but comfortably) and close your eyes. What do you experience? Observe your thoughts, feelings and bodily sensations.
- 2 Focus** on your breathing. Your stomach is rising and falling as you breathe in and out. Anchor yourself by focusing on this movement. If your mind wanders, refocus your attention on your breathing.
- 3 Expand** your attention to your whole body. Notice any sensations you might have. When you feel ready, open your eyes.