

# SOBER Breathing Activity

1.

*This is a mindfulness-based grounding activity designed to assist clients who may be dysregulated or experiencing anxiety, panic, stress or strong cravings. It contains a suggested script for guiding your client through the activity.*

## Firstly, ask permission

It sounds like you are feeling really stressed / anxious / upset at the moment and I really want to be able to talk to you about what is going on. Is it okay if we try a little activity to see if we can calm things down a little bit so we can talk?  
*(wait for response)*

## Explain the concept

It has an unusual name, but the activity is called 'SOBER Breathing' and it's a grounding exercise. SOBER doesn't have anything to do with alcohol - it is an acronym and it stands for STOP, OBSERVE, BREATHE, EXPAND, and RESPOND. It's a simple exercise and I'm going to talk you through how to do it, is that okay? *(wait for response)*

## STOP

Okay the '**S**' stands for **Stop!** So, stop walking or stop whatever it is you are doing, and just take a pause for a minute before you do anything else.

## OBSERVE

'**O**' is for **Observe**. Take some time to observe what is around you. I want you to imagine yourself as a fly on the wall just watching what is going on. What is going on in your body, or in your mind? *(help the client to explore this, "so you feel anxious / so you feel like your heart is racing / so you feel like you're sweating" etc.)*

## BREATHE

'**B**' is for **Breathe**. Become conscious of your breath. Are you breathing too quickly? Or not breathing enough? Let's take three slow breaths in and out together. Ready? Breathe in..... one.....two..... three..... and out.....one..... two.....three..... *(continue breathing exercise three counts in, three counts out for each breath)*

## EXPAND

'**E**' is for **Expand or Evaluate**. Let's now think about the rest of your body now. Let's see if when we take in our breath, we can feel it go all the way deep into your chest and belly. If you feel tense somewhere in your body, see if you can take the breath deep into that part of your body and visualise that breath entering that space. *(Give the client some time and space to do this).* I'm just going to give you a bit of time to take those breaths in. *(Breathe with the client if needed, as they may feel you have hung up otherwise).* Okay So now let's evaluate how you feel after that time?

## RESPOND

'**R**' is for **Respond**. Now that we have taken this time it will give you an opportunity to Respond - not react - to the immediate emotion or feeling that you are having, helping you to be mindful of the decisions that you are making at this time.

## Ending the activity

Now try to bring your attention back slowly to what is around you.

So this is an activity that you can use whenever you feel stuck or overwhelmed. Just try to remember the analogy SOBER. Is there somewhere you can go now where you feel calmer? A nice room in your house or sit outside in the sun? When you feel ready, we can continue...