MODULE OVERVIEW

Stress at work: Calm it with a longer exhale

Adaptive module | ~20 min

Work stress shows up in our breathing first, before anyone even names it: back-to-back meetings, trade-offs, public speaking. And a brain under pressure makes poor decisions. This module focuses on breathing, the one tool that is always available and invisible to others, with precise protocols: David O'Hare's 3-6-5 cardiac coherence as a regular practice, three quick breathing techniques for stress spikes, and linking the practice to a recurring moment in the day.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

01 Understand how stress restricts the diaphragm and why a long exhale triggers the return to calm.

02 Practice cardiac coherence using David O'Hare's 3-6-5 rule: six breaths per minute, for five minutes.

03 Use three quick breathing techniques when pressure suddenly rises: anti-panic breathing, three-part breathing, and the physiological sigh.

04 Build breathing into your day by linking it to moments that already recur: a meeting, a call, a tricky email.

WHO IT'S FOR

Anyone who wants to regain their calm in a few breaths, before a meeting, a call, or a decision.

- **Prerequisite:** none

HOW THE MODULE WORKS

Self-paced, with practice tailored to each learner.

1 **Self-assessment**: on 9 dimensions, to gauge current habits and guide the practice.

2 **Expert video**: 10 minutes, with 3 pauses for reflection.

3 **Practice scenarios**: the first 2 chosen from the self-assessment, then 16 optional ones. Every answer gets feedback: what it leads to, and one way to improve.

4 **Dated commitment**: one action to try, written by the learner or picked from the suggestions.

5 **Memo to download**: key takeaways, questions, commitment, personal notes and checklists.

ASSESSMENT AND COMPLETION

Pass mark: 80%

The score takes into account your answers to the practice scenarios, your commitment and, where relevant, any additional learning activities. Passing requires a commitment and a score of at least 80%.

METHODS & MODELS

- Physiological sigh (cyclic sighing) – Stanford study (Balban, Neri, Huberman et al.)
- 3-6-5 rule (cardiac coherence) – David O'Hare
- Breathing / breathwork – review based on a meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials

SOURCES & REFERENCES

- Balban, Neri, Huberman et al. (Stanford) – Cell Reports Medicine: practicing the "physiological sigh" 5 minutes a day for a month improves mood and lowers resting breathing rate more than mindfulness meditation
- Fincham, Strauss, Montero-Marin & Cavanagh – meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials (Scientific Reports): significant effects of breathwork in reducing stress, anxiety, and depression
- David O'Hare – 3-6-5 method for cardiac coherence (3 times a day, 6 breaths per minute, 5 minutes)
- Ma et al., Frontiers in Psychology (2017) – diaphragmatic breathing, attention, and stress regulation

Module created by Afthonios.com.

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