

# DESENSITIZE THE FEELING OF BREATHLESSNESS

## with Buteyko Breath-Holding techniques

### Breath Holding

How long we can hold our breath is dictated by the amount of 'air hunger' we feel. Air hunger is simply a feeling that develops when you breathe less than your body thinks you should at any particular time.



All of us have experienced air hunger at some point in our lives, even if it was only on the school sports field; we all know that it can feel very unpleasant. The idea of deliberately creating air hunger by practising regular breath holding may seem unnatural, but it is a key step in learning to resist the urge to over-breathe in daily life and in stressful situations.

### What is Air Hunger?

It is easy to assume that when we feel air hunger it is because we are running out of oxygen; but this is not the case. Lack of oxygen in itself produces little in the way of breathlessness until it becomes extreme.

Much of the feeling of air hunger actually comes from an increase in the level of carbon dioxide gas in our blood stream.



Stress and anxiety can also increase air hunger and this is why calming and controlling your breathing is such an important part of the Buteyko approach.

### The Control Pause Exercise

1 Sit in a comfortable upright position. Take a normal sized breath in and out.

*(Don't breathe out too much by forcing air out of your lungs).*

2 Hold your nose gently and start timing yourself.

3 Hold your breath until you feel the **first** sign of discomfort.

4 At this point stop timing, release your nose and breathe in.

*(If you have done everything correctly it should be quite easy to take in a normal sized breath through your nose at the end. If you had to open your mouth, or needed to use force to stop yourself breathing, then you have held your breath for too long.)*

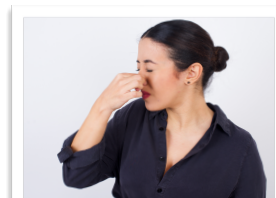
To begin with your Control Pause maybe short - often no more than 10 seconds. It will soon start to rise with practice of the Buteyko techniques.

### Desensitization

Desensitization is used to help people to control anxiety, in this approach people are repeatedly exposed to mild forms of the situation that concerns them until they learn to control their fear response.

This is similar to what happens with Buteyko.

Every time you give yourself a dose of air hunger, while staying relaxed and in control, your emotional response to the feeling of breathlessness will decrease.



Over time this will help you to control your breathing, even during an asthma, anxiety or panic attack.

**For more information visit [www.buteykobreathing.org](http://www.buteykobreathing.org)**

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**This technique can be used to help with a variety of respiratory conditions and dysfunctional breathing. If your breathlessness or other respiratory symptoms become worse contact your doctor for advice and support.**

