

USING SCIENCE TO GET OVER ANXIETY, DEPRESSION,  
ANGER, FREAK-OUTS, AND TRIGGERS

# UNFUCK YOUR BRAIN

WORKBOOK

FAITH HARPER

*PhD, LPC-S, ACS, ACN*



# UNFUCK YOUR BRAIN WORKBOOK

Faith G. Harper,  
PhD, LPC-S, ACS, ACH

Microcosm Publishing  
Portland, OR



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Faith G. Harper, PhD, LPC-S, ACS, ACN

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These worksheets can be used on their own, or as a companion to ***Unfuck Your Brain: Using Science to Get Over Anxiety, Depression, Anger, Freak-outs, and Triggers*** by Dr. Faith G. Harper

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# INTRODUCTION

So what are these fucking worksheets all about, then?

Well, first of all if you are anything like me you don't want to fuck up a perfectly nice book by writing all your mental health shit in it. You certainly can't lend it to anyone after that. And reading it later might be cringe-worthy. And when your pen bleeds through the pages? That sucks a huge amount of ass.

But there is something to be said for writing shit down in general. Research shows we are 40% more likely to follow through on a commitment if we write it down. Writing. Like by hand, not keyboard. It activates the brain in a different way and makes different connections. It helps us process our shit better.

Negative thoughts are like cockroaches. If you turn on the light in the kitchen and see one, you know there are a few hundred more hiding from you, lurking and creating havoc. And you're trying to get all those motherfuckers out into the light so you can excise them from your casa.

These worksheets are designed to help with that process, to give you an organizational structure for your unfuckening process. So you use them however you think best. No prescriptions here. If you are working with a particular issue, it may make sense to use one of these to get your thoughts down on paper. Tuck it into your journal. Bring it in to share with your therapist. Inspect your own processes a little bit more.

You know. Go cockroach hunting.

*Dr. Faith*

## TAKING YOUR OWN TEMPERATURE

This exercise is designed to help you get a read on where you are **right now**. This may change on a regular basis—however you feel, you won't feel that way forever. This isn't about beating yourself up if you are feeling pretty fucked or pretty numbed out. Just take note of what you are working with today.

You can write your answers here or use the mood tracking diary on the next page.

Stop and notice:

- 1) What's going on in your body? (Check out page 11 for words to use in describing your sensations.)
- 2) What are you thinking? If no actual coherent thoughts, what flashes of images or memory tapes are playing for you?



- 3) What are you feeling as a result of these thoughts? How would you rate the severity of those feelings?
- 4) What other external shit are you dealing with in your everyday life that is either helping you cope or making it worse?

Were any of these questions impossible to answer right now? That's ok, too. Just acknowledge that you aren't able to access all the parts of your experience and remind yourself that even noticing you're feeling numb is a perfectly acceptable start.

You have permission to feel what you feel. Let me say that one more time for the people in the back.

**YOU HAVE PERMISSION TO FEEL WHAT YOU FEEL.**

# WEEKLY MOOD TRACK

	MOOD	SITUATION
SUNDAY		
MONDAY		
TUESDAY		
WEDNESDAY		
THURSDAY		
FRIDAY		
SATURDAY		

**KER**

**AM I IN A BAD  
MOOD OR...  
DO YOU SUCK?**



CAUSATION	MAGNITUDE (0-100)	SYMPTOMS

# NAME YOUR SENSATIONS

Sensations and emotions are both considered “feelings” words but they aren’t the same thing! Sensations are the physical ways our **bodies** feel at any given time, and emotions are what our minds feel about what is going on around us. Sensations words go along with our emotions words to help give us information. We often notice our sensations first and can use them to help us identify our emotions. For example, noticing that we are tense and hot may help us realize we are angry, while feeling jittery and shaky may help us realize we are nervous. Like emotions, sensations are designed to give us information and not last forever.

These words can be used to reclaim our language about sensation and reclaim our bodies by understanding how our thoughts and feelings are physically affecting us. Connecting to these sensations can help us better learn to manage our symptoms of stress and trauma. Often we are disconnected from our bodies and don’t have a language for what we’re feeling.

Check in and pay attention to your body and see if any of these words are a fit. It’s okay if they aren’t—that’s good information to have, too.

Burning/Hot/Cold/Warm/Chilly/Icy/Cool/Clammy/Chilly/Sweaty/Gentle

Sharp/Dull/Rough/Smooth

Shaky/Trembly/Tingly/Twitchy /Butterflies/ Jittery/Jumbled/Itchy/Jumpy

Weird/Off-Kilter/Off-Center/Edgy/Tearful/Owie

Hard/Soft

Stuck/Weak

Strong/Tough

Small/Large

Sour/Sweet/Bitter/Salty/Pungent

Relaxed/Calm/Peaceful/Flowing/Spreading/Silky/Still/Tranquil/Comfortable

Undisturbed/Chill/Still/Quiet/Peaceful

Empty/Full

Fast/Slow/Still

Tight/Tense/Pressure/Vibrating/

Dizzy/Fuzzy/Blurry/Woozy/Faint/Light-Headed

Numb/Prickly/Tickly/Goose-Bumpy/Uncomfortable

Light/Heavy

Open/Closed/Loose/Tight

More body qualities to pay attention to: Pressure, Air Current, Pain, Tingling, Itching, Temperature, Size, Weight, Shape, Motion, Speed, Texture, Earth Element, Color, Smell, Taste, Sound, Lack of Sensation. Or add your own!

# LEARNED OPTIMISM LOG

## ADVERSE EVENT

*Adversity*

*Belief*

*Consequences*

*Disputation*

- *Evidence?*
- *Alternatives?*
- *Implications?*
- *Usefulness?*

*Energization*

Some people are naturally optimistic. Others are hardwired for negativity, which probably kept us alive in the past. Moving on, retraining ourselves for optimism, is good for our emotional health. This worksheet is inspired by Martin Seligman's positive psychology, which is discussed in more depth on chapter 6 of **Unfuck Your Brain**. The idea is to catch your negative thinking habits and retrain your brain.

You can do this as often as you want, but try to do it at least once a week.

## LEARNED OPTIMISM LOG DIRECTIONS:

Your first time, just fill out the first three categories (A-B-C). At the end of that period go back and look for examples of pessimism and negativity. Highlight those instances. Did you beat yourself up way more than you expected?

For the second go round, add the last categories (A-B-C-D-E). This is gonna be harder—this is active work to challenge that pessimism and teach yourself optimism instead. But you got this, rock star. It takes practice, stick with it!

**1. Adversity:** Just the facts, baby. Describe what happened (who, what, where, when) being as precise and detailed as you can.

**2. Beliefs:** What were you thinking? Like, exactly. What was your self-talk? Don't care if it was crude, ugly, or weird. Write it down. If it sparked a memory or flashback, that counts, too!

**3. Consequences:** How did these thoughts effect how you felt? How you behaved? What went on in your body? What emotions did you experience? How did you react?

**4. Dispute:** There are four different ways you can dispute these negative beliefs

**a. Evidence?** Is there evidence that your belief was based in reality? If someone says "I hate you," then the belief that they hate you has some evidence behind it, right? But most beliefs really don't.

**b. Alternatives?** Is there another way you can look at this situation? What were the non-static circumstances (for instance, do you really always bomb tests, or were you tired this time from being sick?)? What are the specifics (for instance, maybe you lost a basketball game, but does that make you a bad human being or even a bad athlete)? What did others contribute to the situation (is whatever happened really ALL your fault)?

**c. Implications?** Is the situation really a total catastrophe? What's some perspective you can add to this (ok, so you didn't get that job...does that really mean no one will hire you from now to infinity)?

**d. Usefulness?** Just because something is true doesn't make it useful. How can you frame the experience as one that gives meaning to your life? Do you have a better respect for those things or people you value? Can you better demonstrate that respect now?

**5. Energization:** How do you feel post-disputation? Did your behavior change? Your feelings? Did you notice anything within the problem that you didn't notice before? Maybe even created a solution?

Now go celebrate your success here, hot stuff!

## THE STRENGTHS MAP

You know what sucks ass? How often therapy (or self-help work) focuses on the negative. What you fucked up. What you need to change. What's all broken and jacked. And yeah, we are doing this work so we can make shit better. But being totally neg-focused is depressing as all fuck. And it also isn't helpful to the getting better part if we don't use our strengths to get there.

You are good at shit. You fucking **have** to be, right? You survived this long, after all. So this worksheet is about untethering the strengths you developed from some of the not so good habits that you used to get through that no longer serve you.

Let's stop focusing on the things we want to change for 5 fucking minutes, OK? For now, just look at the stuff that makes you a badass who is completely capable of change.

### **First of all... What is a positive experience?**

It can be:

- An event that went well because you made positive things happen
- Something that you are proud of
- Something you really enjoyed or gave you satisfaction



*Describe an experience that was positive because of the things that you did to make it so:* \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

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---

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*What did you put into this event that made it successful for you?*

*I did* \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

*I did* \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

*I did* \_\_\_\_\_

---

---

*I did* \_\_\_\_\_

---

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*I did* \_\_\_\_\_

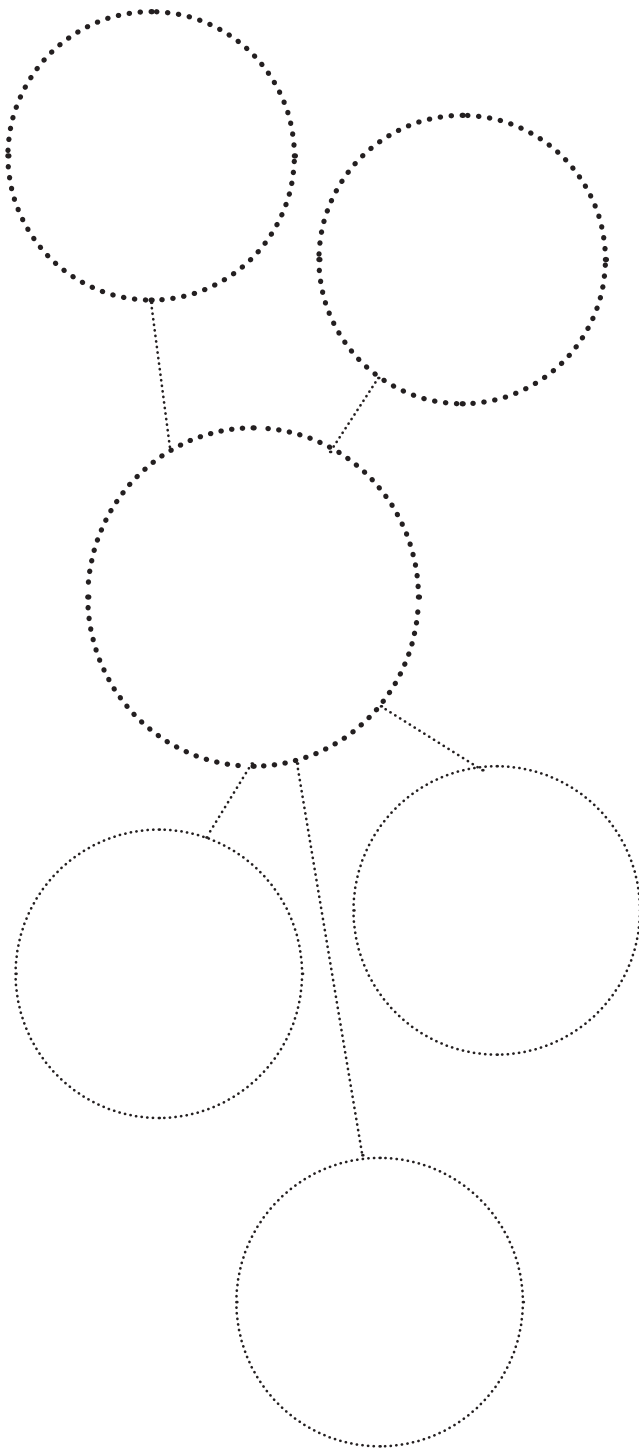
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## NOW MAP IT!

Using the list of strengths below (or choosing any of your own), create a strengths map. In the center, create a label for your positive experience. In the outer circles, add all the strengths that you used to make that experience a positive one

**Now describe this positive experience to someone else, focusing on all the things you did and the strengths you utilized to accomplish these tasks!**



# STRENGTHS VOCABULARY

Accurate	Action oriented	Adventurous	Ambitious
Analytical	Appreciative	Artistic	Athletic
Authentic	Bravery	Caring	Clever
Compassionate	Charming	Communicative	Confident
Considerate	Courageous	Creativity	Critical Thinker
Curious	Dedicated	Determined	Disciplined
Educated	Empathetic	Energetic	Entertaining
Enthusiastic	Fair	Fast	Flexible
Focused	Forgiving	Friendly	Generous
Good-Looking	Grateful	Helpful	Honest
Hopeful	Humble	Idealistic	Independent
Ingenuity	Industrious	Intelligent	Kind
Knowledgeable	Leader	Lively	Logical
Loving	Motivated	Observant	Optimistic
Open	Orderly	Original	Organized
Outgoing	Patient	Perseverant	Persuasive
Persistent	Practical	Precise	Respectful
Responsible	Self-Assured	Serious	Self-Controlled
Spontaneous	Social	Straightforward	Spirituality
Team oriented	Thoughtful	Thrifty	Tactful
Trustworthy	Versatile	Wise	Tolerant

What other strength words can you think of that I didn't?

# PLANNING A CHANGE? DOING THE THING!

## **Are You Ready? Get Set! Go!**

So you've identified something you wanna tackle. Something you want to handle a little bit (or a lot bit) better than you are handling now. Using a 1-10 rating system can help you figure out where you are in preparing to change and what it would look like to move forward.

## **My Goal:**

**Getting Ready:** Spend some time writing or just thinking about these questions:

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with ten representing the best it can be (all the fucks needed to change) and 1 the worse (no fucks to give), where would you be today?
- Where would you say you were a day or two ago? What was happening in your life when your rating was higher? What about when it was lower?
- When you have gone down, how did you stop yourself from going further down?
- What would be a realistic movement up the scale right now or in the near future?
- How would you know if you moved up on the scale?
- What would need to happen for you to move up?

- What skills do you have to start making that happen?
- What have you learned from previous experiences to make that happen?

### **Micromovements To Achieving Goals**

Now that you have identified the goal you're working toward and what it is going to take to gather up the effort to make that change, it's time to create your plan of attack.

- What is my first step in achieving my goal?
- What am I willing to attend to first?
- What am I willing to notice about what is going well?
- What experiments am I willing to try?

### **Map Out Your Micromovements**

Use a new page to actually map out your micromovements towards your goal, with the last one being "green for motherfucking GO!"

# BE YOUR OWN TEAM

## TITLE

*(What's the goal? What do you want?)*

## EVENTS

*(When do little pieces of goal progress happen? When do things go right?)*

# AGENCY

*(How do you move toward that goal?)*

*What's in your control?)*

# MOVEMENT

*(What good things are resulting?)*

*What progress are you making?)*

When a goal is huge (dirty!) or long-term (exhausting!) it becomes so easy to fall off track because the progress can feel tiny when the task is daunting. This worksheet comes from Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) theory, it not only helps track progress but is empowering AF because it reminds you what is in your control, what you have agency over, and how much effort you are putting into the work you are doing for yourself. We all need pats on the back, even if we have to give them to our own damn selves. Use a TEAM sheet for every goal you have, like quitting smoking or starting a new habit or finishing a project.

# GOLD FUCKING STAR

You know what I miss from childhood? Gold stars. People recognizing the effort I put into something. So I totally give out gold stars and everyday achievement awards in my private practice. Since I'm not around to make sure **you** get all the gold stars you need, here is a form so you can give them to yourself. I also suggest you announce loudly and publicly "GOLD FUCKING STAR, MOTHERFUCKERS!" and demand applause. Or not. But it would be awesome if we all started doing that for each other.

**GOLD  
FUCKING  
STAR**



**I TRIED  
THE THING**  
AND BY "THING",  
DR FAITH MEANS  
HEALTHY FUCKING  
COPING SKILL

0-10 RATING ON  
**HOW I FELT  
BEFORE I  
TRIED THE  
THING**

0-10 RATING ON  
**HOW I FELT  
AFTER I  
TRIED THE  
THING**

0-10 RATING ON  
**MY GENERAL  
FEELINGS  
ABOUT THE  
THING**





# MY PERSONAL CRISIS RESPONSE SAFETY PLAN

When I begin to experience thoughts of suicide or self-injury, I will do the following:

1. I will try to identify specifically what is upsetting me.
2. I will write down other responses I can have to this situation that do not involve harming myself.
3. I will review the thoughts and conclusions that I've come to about this situation and try to figure out if they are either accurate or helpful.
4. I will do something I enjoy that helps me feel better for at least 30 minutes. Some of these activities may include:

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

5. I will talk with someone whom I trust to be supportive about how I'm feeling. These people may include (list names and numbers):

a. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

6. I will repeat all of the above **at least one more time.**
7. If the thoughts continue, and I find myself preparing to do something to myself, I will call my preferred local crisis line or suicide hotline (for example, 1-800-273-TALK). Please list options below:

8. If I still feel in danger of harming or killing myself and don't feel I can control my behavior I will call 911 or go to the ER. My preferred ER is:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Name and Phone Numbers of Other Important Contacts for Me**

Case Manager: \_\_\_\_\_

Therapist: \_\_\_\_\_

Psychiatrist \_\_\_\_\_

Clinic Where I Get Services: \_\_\_\_\_

PCP: \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Witness Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# MINDFULNESS MEDITATION

Here's my recipe for mindfulness meditation:

*Sit upright. If you can do this without back support, like on the floor on a cushion then good on you. If you need a straight back chair, do that. If you can't sit at all, that's OK, too. Get yourself in whatever position is most comfortable. The reason sitting is better than laying down is that the point is to fall awake, not fall asleep. But the point is also to not be in screaming fucking pain, so don't stress it.*

*Soft-focus your eyes so they aren't closed but they are seeing without actually seeing. You know what I mean. Be visually spaced out because what you are really going to be paying attention to is inside you.*

*And now you are going to breathe in and out. Focus on your breath. If you have never done this before it's going to be weird and hard. But for the record, if you have done this a zillion times chances are still good that it will be weird and hard.*

*If you catch yourself being distracted, just label it "thinking" and go back to focusing on your breath. Thinking isn't a failure in the least. It's gonna happen. Noticing it and bringing the mind back to the present moment is the point. So it's a total win.*

*Treat your bodily reactions like any other random thought. Itching is common. If you catch yourself itching, label it thinking three times before succumbing to the urge to scratch. You may be surprised and how often your brain is creating things for you to focus on. Of course, if you have real pain, don't ever ignore that. Rearrange yourself for comfort and don't be a hero.*

A lot of people feel awful during meditation, thinking they suck at it because they are continuously distracted by chatting thoughts. That's OK. Your brain is desperately seeking to story-tell. All kind of distracting stuff is going to come up. You are going to think about what you need to cook for dinner. Or a conversation you had at work. Or whether or not you should buy new sneakers or go to a movie this weekend.

I'm not even going to pretend that this shit is easy to do when you are spun up. But it's important to at least try. Because part of a panic attack is the stories our brain starts telling us about the attack itself. And it's generally not a pretty story. The chemicals released during an anxiety or panic attack are designed to get your breathing ramped up and your heart racing. So your brain starts insisting that you are going to have a heart attack or will stop breathing. That's not going to happen. When you catch that thinking, remind yourself that's a biochemical response, but not reality.

And here is the thing about mindfulness meditation... research shows that it disrupts the storytelling process of the default network. We used to think the only way to do that was a distraction by outside events and stimulus, but the opposite works, too.

So keep breathing. The continued, conscious effort to breathe and un-tense will slow the heart rate back down and help you get more oxygen flowing. It's a literal chemical counter-balance. And it gives your brain the space it needs to tell itself new stories.

# PASSIVE PROGRESSIVE RELAXATION

Now we are going to work on relaxing each part of your body moving progressively down. This isn't one of those exercises where you tense up first so you can then relax yourself and feel the difference. That's a useful exercise on other occasions, but not when you already fucking know you are tense and don't need anything else making you more tense.

If it helps you to have prompts you can find lots of guided progressive relaxation exercises on YouTube.

Start with the deep breathing. You know how to do this part now, so you can move the teddy bear or growler. Relax, and lay your arms and hands, palms to the earth, down to your side next to you. Close your eyes if that feels safe and comfortable for you.

- ***Start at the top of your head. Feel it from your crown, moving slowly down your scalp. Feel your ears relax.***
- ***Feel your temples relax, and then your brows.***
- ***Feel your eyes relax, then your cheeks, then your nose, and then your mouth. Your lips and your tongue.***
- ***Feel your throat relax. Then your neck.***
- ***Feel your shoulders relax. Yes, even your shoulders.***
- ***Focus on letting them drop everything they've been holding for you. They get to rest, too.***
- ***Focus on your right hand. Let the calm flow from your right shoulder, down your arm. Through your wrists, then into each finger. Start with your thumb and move through each finger to your pinky.***

- *Focus on your left hand. Let the calm flow from your left shoulder, down your arm. Through your wrists, then into each finger. Start with your thumb and move through each finger to your pinky.*
- *Now focus back on your shoulders, and let the relaxation flow through your chest down into your belly. Your belly is moving gently as you continue deep breathing, but otherwise has no other work to do right now. It doesn't have to hold itself up or in with any tightness.*
- *Now go back to your shoulders, and let the relaxation flow down your upper back to your lower back. You've been holding a lot there, haven't you? Maybe the entirety of the world. You don't have to, at least for right now. Let it go for a while.*
- *Relax through your buttocks, through your root chakra, and down through your hips. Let the calm flow down through your thighs.*
- *Move down to your knees, then your calves.*
- *Move down to your ankles. Your feet. Let yourself relax each toe. Start with your big toe and move to your pinky toe.*

Once you feel ready, you can open your eyes and slowly get back up again. You may feel a little sleepy, or woozy, or fuzzy. That's OK. Take your time rejoining the world and remember what relaxed feels like. You're allowed to feel that way!

# DEEP BREATHING

When I work with kids, I call it belly breathing. When I work with vets, police officers, and first responders, I call it tactical breathing. The official term is diaphragmatic breathing or abdominal breathing, which are just the most ridiculous words ever...I swear to Buddha, we must make this shit up just to see if we can get people to follow along.

So if you have seen any of those terms it's totally all the same thing. And all it really means is that you are taking in your breaths by contracting your diaphragm, which is a muscle lies horizontally across your body, between your abdominal cavity and your thoracic cavity.

Sounds complicated? Not so much. You totally know how to take a deep breath. It's when your belly moves instead of your chest. You get far more oxygen in your blood when you are breathing in this manner, which will disrupt the anxiety response. Have you ever been so anxious that you felt light headed and about to pass out? Your breathing was likely totally to blame. You weren't breathing in a way that gave you the oxygen you need to manage your anxiety response.

If you want to practice this, lie down and put something on your belly. Your favorite stuffed animal, your unopened growler bottle, whatever. You should see it move while you breathe.

Yup, that's it, you got it.

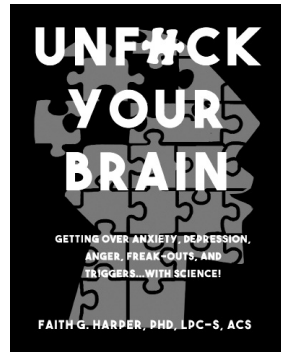
Try to focus on your breathing instead of the other bullshit chatter that your brain is insisting you pay attention to. Counting helps, too. Try these counts for breathing in, holding, and breathing out.

Only count as high as you can comfortably go. You aren't gonna get graded on your breathing and it isn't meant to be stressful. If you're asthmatic, have allergies, etc., anything more than 6 seconds may be literally impossible. No sweat, OK?

<i>Breathe in and Count To</i>	<i>Hold and Count To</i>	<i>Breathe Out and Count To</i>
3	3	3
3	3	6
6	6	6
6	6	9
9	9	9
9	9	12



*I have the whole 5  
MINUTE THERAPY set, but  
I have to keep buying  
them again because my  
friends need them too!*



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