



Interoceptive Exposure: Safety & Step-by-Step Guide

These exercises gently recreate some of the sensations of anxiety or panic so your brain can learn they are uncomfortable, but not dangerous.

This sheet is a practical reference you can keep nearby: when to use interoceptive exposure, how to do a few core exercises, and how to stay within safe, kind boundaries.

SAFETY FIRST: CHECK THIS FIRST

These exercises are designed for most generally healthy adults, but **do not** use them if you have:

- Uncontrolled heart conditions or serious rhythm problems.
- Severe asthma or other significant breathing disorders.
- Recent concussion, head injury, or serious medical illness.
- Any medical advice against exertion, spinning, or breath-holding.

If you're unsure whether this is safe for you, talk to a medical professional before trying these exercises.

HOW TO USE THIS SHEET

- Start when you're in a relatively calm state, not in the middle of a full panic spike.
- Choose **one exercise at a time** from the menu.
- Aim for **mild to moderate discomfort**, not distress or pushing through fear.
- Stop, pause, or modify if you feel overwhelmed or unwell.
- After each exercise, notice the sensations and let them pass using tools from the Trek (floating, gentle self-talk, slow breathing).

WHAT TO DO AFTER EACH EXERCISE

- Pause and simply notice your sensations — heart, breath, dizziness, warmth.
- Silently say a neutral phrase: **"This is uncomfortable, not dangerous."**
- Allow sensations to rise, stay, and fall on their own.
- Use 4–6 calming breaths if that feels supportive.
- Resist the urge to "snap back to normal" — give your body a minute to settle.

These exercises are about **learning**, not testing yourself or "winning." Small, repeatable steps are enough.

EXERCISE MENU (CHOOSE ONE AT A TIME)

Light Spinning (Dizziness Practice)

BALANCE

Gently practice feeling dizzy without panic.

How: Sit or stand and spin slowly in a circle for about **5–10 seconds**. Stop and stand or sit still, eyes open.

You may feel: dizziness, wobbliness, eye flicker, light floating feeling.

Reminder: Dizziness from spinning is normal and temporary. Notice it, label it ("this is spinning dizziness"), and let it fade.

Breathing Through a Straw

BREATH

Practice mild breath tightness safely.

How: If safe for you, gently inhale and exhale through a straw (or pursed lips if no straw) for **20–30 seconds** at a comfortable pace.

You may feel: mild air hunger, slightly restricted airflow, awareness of chest and throat.

Reminder: A slightly "narrow" breath can feel strange but is not dangerous when done gently. You are practicing staying with the feeling instead of fighting it.

Jog in Place for 20 Seconds

HEART

Practice noticing a faster heart and breath.

How: Jog in place at a light pace for about **20 seconds**.

Then stand still and notice your heartbeat and breathing as they slow down.

You may feel: increased heart rate, warmer face, faster breathing, light sweat.

Reminder: A faster heart from gentle movement is expected. You are teaching your brain that a pounding heart can be safe, not a danger alarm.

Hold Breath for 5–10 Seconds

BREATH

Practice "air hunger" in a gentle way.

How: Take a normal, comfortable breath in. Hold it for **5–10 seconds**, then exhale and return to normal breathing.

You may feel: urge to breathe, tightness in throat or chest, focus on air flow.

Reminder: A short, gentle breath hold is safe for most healthy people. If you feel unwell or dizzy, stop and breathe normally — the goal is practice, not pushing.

Tense Chest Muscles for 10 Seconds

CHEST

Practice feeling chest tightness without panic.

How: Gently squeeze your chest and upper arms inward (like giving yourself a small hug) and hold the tension for about **10 seconds**, then slowly release.

You may feel: tight chest, pressure, warmth in shoulders or arms.

Reminder: This tightness is created by your own muscles and eases as you relax them. You are learning that "tight chest" does not automatically mean danger.

MINI PRACTICE LOG (OPTIONAL)

Use this lightly — a few words is enough. The aim is to notice patterns, not judge yourself.

Log a few practice attempts

Date	Exercise	Anxiety 0–10	What did I notice?	What did I learn?

You might write things like "heart racing but okay," "dizziness faded in 30s," or "I can feel this and stay here."

These exercises are practice, not performance. You are teaching your nervous system that sensations can be allowed, not feared.

Small, repeated steps matter far more than big heroic ones.

From the Mind Trek: Panic to Calm

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