

Spirit Level Success™ System - Six Secrets of Self-Esteem

Secret #1 SELF – Week 3

S.T.A.I.R.™ – Time

The **T** in **S.T.A.I.R.**™ stands for **Time**. When you are having one of those moments, where you're in a spiral of destructive thinking and the barrage of internal criticism is coming fast and furious, make a conscious choice to take some Time, even just a few minutes, to **pause, breathe and assess** the reality of what you are saying to yourself on the inside – because your internal dialogue is so incredibly powerful.

So, first things first, STOP. Break the pattern, break the cycle. Consciously decide that you are going to simultaneously disengage with any destructive thoughts, and deepen and regularise your breathing at the same time, both of which will help to get you grounded.

Did you know that your breathing is the only physiological process in your body that you have any control over, and that you can speed it up and slow it down at will? Every other process in your body works automatically and subconsciously.

Whenever you are feeling anxious, you will almost certainly be breathing in a very shallow way, and sometimes, on rare occasions, this can lead to hyperventilating which can feel very uncomfortable and scary. But you can deliberately make yourself start to feel calmer and less fearful by consciously changing your breathing pattern. You may have heard about people who are hyperventilating being given a brown **paper** (NEVER plastic) bag to breathe into for a short while (6 or so breaths maximum) or breathing into their cupped hands if a paper bag isn't available. This is to help them regularise their breathing and helps them become calm again.

Before you start to consider your own breathing, firstly connect with your heart rhythm and pulse by placing the middle and forefingers of one hand (not your thumb which has a pulse of its own) together on the side of your neck or on the inside of your wrist. Feel the steady rhythm of your heart, and give yourself time to simply connect with and acknowledge the miracle of your body and the fact that you are alive.

Take a moment to pause right now, close your eyes and pay attention to your breathing. Notice each individual in-breath and each individual out-breath. Isn't it incredible, what your body is able to do automatically, without any conscious input from you?

Now start to count slowly and consistently with each breath in and out;

**(On the in-breath) 1, 2, 3, hold,
(On the out-breath) 1, 2, 3, hold,**

**(On the in-breath) 1, 2, 3, hold,
(On the out-breath) 1, 2, 3, hold,**

And so on.

And as you count, place your hands on your lower tummy, and breathe as fully as you can with each breath in and out – so you can see your hands moving up and down rhythmically. Breathe out so you fully empty your lungs, and in so you feel the breath all the way down to your diaphragm.

Do this for a few minutes right now. What do you notice?

When you are comfortable with this balanced rhythm and counting, you can increase the positive effect even further by changing the balance of counting on your in and out breath, so the counting becomes;

In, 2, 3, hold

Out, 2, 3, 4, 5, hold

In, 2, 3, hold

Out, 2, 3, 4, 5, hold

In, 2, 3, hold

Out, 2, 3, 4, 5, hold

In, 2, 3, hold

Out, 2, 3, 4, 5, hold

And so on.

After a short while, when you are rhythmically breathing in this way, you can turn your attention to your body and, starting from the top of your head, work your way slowly down through your head, neck, shoulders and arms, gradually down through your torso to the base

of your feet – simply paying attention to what you notice along the way.

With practice, you will be able to use this technique to help bring yourself back to calm and balance in any circumstance, anytime.

And now you have taken time to **pause**, and to **breathe**, you have the opportunity to really look at the reality of whatever situation is before you, and to ask yourself some very important questions.

Think about a situation that is either happening right now, or has happened previously but is still bothering you in some way. What are you telling yourself about the situation, such that you feel like this?

Is what you are telling yourself right now, *really* true? And if so, is it *really* true 100% of the time, no exceptions?

What other possible interpretation of this situation *could* there be (however unlikely it may seem)?

If your best friend was standing next to you right now, what would they say to you?

How will you feel about this when you look back in 5 years' time?

It is really important that you take time during this week to repeat the work covered so far in this Secret.

Value yourself enough and really connect with your motivation, so you can prioritise this and spend *sufficient* time on it, ensuring you make a meaningful emotional connection with each step you take.

This is your time now, and you matter.