

PERT: Positive Emotion Refocusing Technique

Personal responsibility for emotional well-being means choosing to focus on what is good and beautiful in life. Imagine having a remote control that lets you change the channel in your mind—moving from resentment and grievance to gratitude, love, and forgiveness.

PERT (Positive Emotion Refocusing Technique) helps you shift attention when painful memories or resentments unexpectedly appear. When we replay grievances repeatedly, they become habits reinforced by stress reactions and negative thinking. PERT interrupts that pattern, calming the body and helping you regain emotional control.

With practice, PERT reduces the emotional power of unforgiveness. It helps you maintain peace even in upsetting situations. When faced with a stressful encounter or painful memory, you can quickly restore a positive focus and make clearer decisions.

PERT can help:

- When dealing with an angry boss
- While navigating stressful traffic
- Before visiting someone difficult
- When remembering painful family experiences
- During ongoing relationship struggles
- When feelings of anger, despair, or bitterness arise

With practice, PERT takes only about fifteen seconds and can be done anywhere without anyone knowing.

You can use it during arguments, while receiving difficult news, or when preparing to assert yourself. Practicing PERT reduces the emotional power others hold over you and increases self-confidence and calm. Blame and resentment are replaced with moments of peace that empower you.

How to Practice PERT

Practice PERT whenever unresolved grievances or emotional pain arise. Begin with the first three steps. As you grow comfortable, add steps four and five.

Step 1: Focus on Breathing

Bring your attention to your lower abdomen. Slowly draw in two or three deep breaths and release them. It helps to imagine observing your breathing from a point just below your navel.

Step 2: Expand the Belly

As you inhale, allow your belly to gently expand. Let your diaphragm rise and notice your abdomen widening.

Step 3: Release the Breath

As you exhale, gently contract your abdomen and push the air out, allowing your belly to flatten.

Pause and notice how you feel before and after these breaths.

Reflection:

Describe any changes you notice in your body or mood.

Ongoing Practice Reflection

Over the next week, practice PERT whenever memories or feelings of hurt arise.

Reflect on:

- How did the practice help?
- Did you notice any softening of emotion?
- What challenges did you encounter?

Step 4: Activate Loving Emotion

Once the first three steps feel comfortable, add step four whenever grievances arise.

On the third deep inhalation, bring to mind someone you love or a time when you felt deeply loved. Move your attention from your abdomen to the area around your heart. Allow yourself to feel warmth and caring in that space.

Let that loving feeling grow.

Reflection:

How did you feel before and after practicing this step?

Step 5: Seek Inner Guidance

When comfortable with the first four steps, you may add step five. This step offers perspective from the calm, compassionate part of yourself rather than the stressed, reactive part.

With attention centered around your heart and feelings of warmth present, ask yourself for guidance about how to handle the grievance or hurt. Listen for a response that is gentle and calm rather than bitter or reactive.

You do not need to practice step five every time, but using it regularly deepens the effect of PERT.

Reflection:

What new understandings or insights emerged?

Continuing Reflection

With regular practice, PERT changes how you relate to grievances and emotional triggers.

Describe any changes you notice in your thoughts, reactions, or feelings.