

Cuddling a Mechanical 'Breathing Cushion' Could Help Ease Anxiety

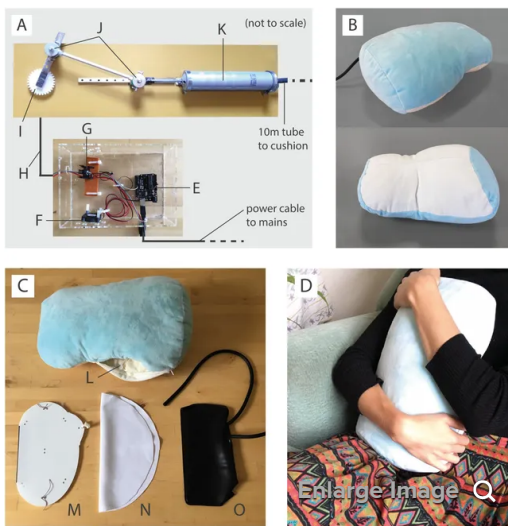
The gentle rise and fall of the machines.



Amanda Kooser
March 10, 2022 3:40 p.m. PT

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In times of stress, I often reach for my big old cat, cuddle him in my arms and bury my face in his fur, feeling his chest rise and fall against the side of my face. He's kind enough to tolerate me, but he might get a reprieve from hug duty if I were to get a "breathing cushion."



A team led by researchers at the University of Bristol in the UK has developed a soft pillow that feels like it's breathing. The idea is that a person could wrap their arms around it and hug it to help relieve anxiety.

These images show the innards of the breathing cushion and what it looks like when someone is hugging it.

Haynes et al., 2022, PLOS ONE

The team built several prototype devices to mimic breathing, purring and heartbeats, but focus groups picked out the breathing version as the most calming. The cushion is the focus of a [study published this week in the journal PLOS One](#).

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A group of 129 volunteers participated in an experiment involving a math test. "Using pre- and post-test questionnaires, the researchers found that students who used the device were less anxious pre-test than those who did not," [PLOS said in a statement](#) on Wednesday.

[Robots](#) and machines haven't typically been regarded as cuddly, friendly objects, but designers have been developing softer and more approachable devices in recent years, including [robots shaped like seals and ducks](#).

The researchers intend to refine the mechanical pillow, expand testing and gather more detailed data on users' responses to it.

"We were excited to find that holding the breathing cushion, without any guidance, produced a similar effect on anxiety in students as a meditation practice," [the study's authors said](#). "This ability of the device to be used intuitively opens it up to providing wider audiences with accessible anxiety relief."

Science 

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**Jared DiPane**

March 7, 2022 5:33 a.m. PT



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I can't believe we're already a full week into March, but here we are. March Madness, the huge college basketball tournament, kicks off on March 13 and runs through April 4 this year. If you've been wondering how to stream it in the best quality and the easiest way, this deal is the one for you. Right now, Amazon is not only discounting its Fire TV devices but the company is also including a 14-day Sling TV free trial with the purchase.

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- Fire TV Stick Lite: \$20 (was \$30)
- Fire TV Stick 4K: \$30 (was \$50)
- Fire TV Cube: \$70 (was \$120)

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