

DEEP-BREATHING EXERCISES



TAKING DEEP BREATHS is one of the simplest ways to produce the RELAXATION response.

When we get tense or anxious, we tend to take shallow breaths as part of the stress response. When we take DEEP breaths, we signal our brain that we are no longer stressed.

For maximum impact, practice 10- 20 minutes in a comfortable location at the same time each day.

BREATH FOCUS

Find a comfortable, quiet place to sit or lie down.

1. Take a normal breath.
2. Now, take a deep, slow breath
3. The air coming in through your nose should move downward into your lower belly. Let your abdomen expand fully.
4. Now, breathe out through your mouth (or your nose, if that feels more natural.)
5. Alternate normal and deep breaths several times.
6. Pay attention to how you feel when you inhale and exhale normally and when you breathe deeply.
7. Practice deep breathing for several minutes.
8. Put one hand on your abdomen, just below your belly button.
9. Feel your hand rise about an inch each time you inhale and fall about an inch each time you exhale. Your chest will rise slightly, too, in concert with your abdomen.
10. Remember to relax your belly so that each inhalation expands it fully.



Practice this exercise with or without the variations below daily for 10 minutes, increasing to 20 minutes.

Variations:

Add Imagery:

Imagine that the air you breathe in washes peace and calm into your body. As you breathe out, imagine that the air leaving your body carries tension and anxiety away with it.

Add a Focal Word or Phrase:

As you inhale, try saying, “Breathing in peace and calm.” And as you exhale, say “Breathing out tension and anxiety.” Or as you inhale, say, “I am”. And as you exhale, say “Calm/ Relaxed/at peace.” Or as you inhale or exhale, simply say, “Calm” or “Peace.”

COUNT 1-2-3

Sit or lie down in a comfortable place.

1. Place your hand just below your navel so you can feel the gentle rise and fall of your belly as you breathe.
2. Breathe in S...L...O...W...L...Y
3. PAUSE for a count of THREE. 1....2....3....
4. Breathe out.
5. PAUSE for a count of THREE. 1....2....3....
6. Continue to breathe deeply for 10 minutes – 20 minutes, pausing for a count of 3 (1....2....3) after each inhalation and each exhalation.



SQUARE BREATHING

Sit or lie comfortably

1. Take a deep breath as you count to FOUR. 1..2..3..4. Point your finger UP as you INHALE.
2. PAUSE for a count of FOUR. 1..2..3..4.. As you count, point your finger to the RIGHT.
3. EXHALE as you count to FOUR. 1..2..3..4. Move your finger DOWN as you EXHALE.
4. PAUSE for a count of FOUR. 1..2..3..4. As you count, move your finger to the LEFT.
5. Continue deep breathing and moving your finger to make the shape of a square for 10 – 20 minutes.



