

Breathing Exercises

Breathing exercises increase blood flow to the brain, engaging a calming response and better accessing the portion of the brain responsible for reasoning.

Directions:

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable place.
2. Bring your awareness to your breathing. Breathing in slowly, holding your breath at the top of the inhale for a brief moment, and exhaling slowly, holding your breath at the bottom of the exhale for a brief moment.
3. Inhale slowly. Pause. Exhale slowly. Pause. Repeat this a few times.
4. Hold your hand on your abdomen as you breathe, noticing how your abdomen expands with each deep inhalation.
5. Continue to repeat the breathing. Inhale slowly. Pause. Exhale slowly. Pause. Simply noticing the expansion of your abdomen for a few moments.
6. If it feels helpful, you can add a cue word to the breathing. Imagine the cue word calmly and soothingly washing over you as you notice your breathing.

4-7-8 Breathing Exercise

1. Breathe in through your nose for the count of 4
2. Hold your breath for the count of 7
3. Breathe out slowly through your mouth for the count of 8

Repeat these steps 3-4 times.

Slow Belly Breathing

1. Put one hand on your belly
2. Breathe in through your nose, feel your belly rise
3. Breathe out slowly through your mouth
4. Repeat for a few minutes

Sigh Breathing

1. Breathe in through your nose
2. Let out a long, audible sigh through your mouth
3. Repeat this 3-5 times

Square Breathing

1. Sit down in a comfortable place and in a comfortable position
2. Bring your awareness to your breath for a few cycles
3. Start doing a few cycles of deep breathing
4. Imagine a square
5. As you inhale, count up to 4 imagining that with each count you go up one side of the square
6. Hold your breath for 4 counts as you imagine going through the top of the square
7. Exhale counting up to 4 as your picture going down the other side of the square
8. Hold your breath for 4 counts as you imagine going through the base of the square
9. Repeat this cycle for a few times

Alternate Nostril Breathing

1. Close one nostril with your thumb and breathe through the other nostril
2. Switch nostrils and breathe out
3. Reverse
4. Go slowly, repeat this 4-6 times.

Three Steps to Deep Breathing

In order to experience deep breathing, first you will have to identify and experience the three types of breathing that comprise it. For the exercise, it is better to lay down on your back if possible. Place your right hand on top of your navel and your left hand on top of your heart. Start by observing the natural flow of your breath for a few cycles.

- Abdominal breathing
 - With the next inhalation think of intentionally sending the air towards your navel by letting your abdomen expand and rise freely.
 - Feel your right hand rising while your left hand remains almost still on top of your chest.
 - Feel your right hand coming down as your exhale while keeping your abdomen relaxed.
 - Continue to repeat this for a few minutes without straining your abdomen, but rather allowing it to expand and relax freely.
 - After some repetitions, return to your natural breathing.
- Thoracic breathing
 - Without changing your position, now shift your attention to your ribcage.
 - With the next inhalation, think of intentionally sending the air towards your ribcage instead of your abdomen.
 - Let the thorax expand and rise freely, allowing your left hand to move up and down as you keep breathing.
 - Breathe through your chest without engaging your diaphragm, slowly and deeply.
 - Allow your right hand to remain almost still.
 - Continue to repeat this breathing pattern for a few minutes.
 - After some repetitions, return to your natural breathing.
- Clavicular breathing
 - With the next inhalation, repeat the thoracic breathing pattern.
 - When the ribcage is completely expanded, inhale a bit more thinking of allowing the air to fill the upper section of your lungs at the base of your neck.
 - Feel your shoulders and collarbone rise up gently to find some space for the extra air to come in.
 - Exhale slowly letting your collarbone and shoulders drop first and then continue to relax your ribcage.
 - Continue to repeat this for a few minutes.
 - After some repetitions, return to your natural breathing.