

Breathwork

Breathing slowly and rhythmically makes your body feel like it does when you are relaxed. This sends a message to your brain to calm down. Focusing on your breathing can also reduce your sense of stress by clearing your mind of negative thoughts.

Abdominal (belly) breathing

- Find a relaxed, comfortable position. Keep your back straight, but not tight. Put a hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other on your chest.
- Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose, and let your belly push your hand out as the muscles relax. Your chest should not move.
- Hold that breath for a moment, then breathe out through pursed lips as if you were whistling. Keep your back straight. Let belly muscles tighten. Feel the hand on your belly go in.
- Take your time with each breath. Try taking in and expelling a little more air with each breath. Notice where you feel your breath in your body – chest, abdomen, nostrils.
- Do this 5 to 10 times.

4-7-8 breathing

- Put one hand on your belly and the other on your chest.
- Take a deep, slow breath from your belly, and silently count to 4 as you breathe in.
- Hold your breath while you silently count from 1 to 7.
- Breathe out slowly as you silently count from 1 to 8. Try to push all the air out of your lungs by the time you get to 8.
- Repeat 3 to 5 times or until you notice you feel calmer.
- If it feels difficult, reduce the count but keep the ratio. For example, do a 3-5-6 or 2-3-4 count.

Energizing breathing

Deep breathing naturally brings in a greater volume of oxygen, which can be energizing. This technique can be used at any time during the day to increase energy and help relieve muscle tension.

- Stand and bend forward at the waist with your knees slightly bent. Let your arms hang down toward the floor.
- As you inhale slowly and deeply, slowly come up to a standing position rolling your body upwards and your head straightening up last.
- Hold your breath for a few seconds in this position, then slowly exhale and bend forward at the waist.
- Repeat several times.

Mindful release breathing

- Relax. Allow your body and mind to settle. Do what helps you become comfortable. Create a stable base for yourself. Gently allow eyes to close or maintain a soft gaze with partially closed eyes.
- Take a few complete, deep breaths, in and out. Then trust the breath to continue on its own.
- Notice where your breath is most obvious in your body. It may be the movement of your belly or chest or a sensation beneath your nostrils.
- Gently bring your attention to your feet and legs. Notice any tension or tightness there. Don't judge the feeling. Just notice it. Now, as you breathe in, imagine collecting all the tension there, pulling it up into your lungs and, as you breathe out, send the tension out with your breath.
- You can mentally say, "Tense" as you breathe in and notice tension.
- Mentally say, "Relax" as you breathe out and release tension.
- With your next breath, breathe in as you collect the tension in your chest and midsection. Gather it up and then picture it leaving your body with your exhale.
- Notice how your body feels as it relaxes. Be compassionate with yourself.
- Now focus your attention on your hands, arms and shoulders. Notice any tightness there. As you breathe in, pull that tension to center and then release it as you exhale.
- Finally, notice any sensations of tension in your neck and head. Gently pull the tension together as you inhale and imagine it leaving your body as you exhale.
- Sit quietly and breathe naturally. Notice the feeling of your relaxed body.
- Wiggle your fingers and toes and gently open your eyes. Take your time to adjust. Note your experience. Observe any difference between when you began and now.