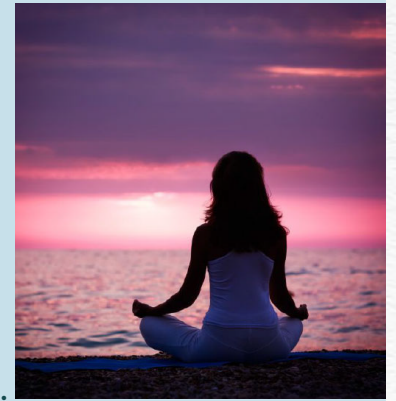


Techniques for Calming the Body Through Breath

Our breath mirrors our emotional and physical states—whether stressed, joyous, or active. Conversely, we hold the power to influence our nervous system and physical well-being by cultivating awareness of and altering our breath, often referred to as breathing exercises. Engaging in these exercises can promote relaxation, alleviate discomfort, and enhance mental wellness. One such technique is abdominal breathing, also known as diaphragmatic breathing, which elevates oxygen levels in the body and strengthens the diaphragm. Many individuals experience heightened relaxation and concentration following abdominal breathing, with some finding it beneficial for processing negative emotions. The beauty of breathing exercises lies in their accessibility; they can be practiced anytime, anywhere, at no cost, offering an ideal means to manage stress and nurture overall well-being.



Get Started

- ➔ Sit or lie down comfortably, with your feet flat on the floor. Put one hand on your upper chest, and the other on your abdomen, just under your ribcage. Feel yourself breathing and become aware of how deeply or shallowly you are breathing.
- ➔ Take a deep breath, feeling your abdomen rise as you breathe. Your upper hand should move very little, while your abdomen lifts your other hand. Imagine a feeling of warmth as the breath moves from your mouth, down your throat, into your lungs, and your diaphragm expands.
- ➔ Hold the breath for a count of four.
- ➔ Exhale slowly through your nose for a count of four.
- ➔ Inhale slowly to a count of four, feeling the warmth of your breath and your abdomen rising. Try to keep your chest relatively still. Hold the breath for four, then exhale slowly, and repeat.

Reflect

- ➔ Consider how your body feels different from before practicing conscious breathing. Are your shoulders more relaxed?
- ➔ Do your thoughts feel any different?

Repeat

- ➔ Five minutes of abdominal breathing daily can support relaxation, decrease stress, and improve one's sense of wellbeing. Learning to practice abdominal breathing while seated or lying down is preferred. However, any conscious breathing is beneficial, even one or two breaths when standing in line at the grocery store.

As you progress, you might discover that incorporating your hands into abdominal breathing exercises becomes unnecessary. Additionally, you may choose to gently contract your abdomen at the conclusion of each exhale, aiding in the expulsion of any residual air. For added effectiveness, individuals often integrate visualizations, repetitive words, or affirmations during the intervals between breaths. With consistent practice, you will identify the rhythm and routine that suit you best.

Practice whenever you can. Because of how abdominal breathing affects your mental state, it may be especially useful when you are stressed out, tired, frustrated, or confused. Abdominal breathing can help you to relax, reset, and refocus.

References

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