

Catch Your Breath

Take a deep breath. It's advice we've all heard, whether we are feeling stressed, angry, or are in pain. Did you know that breathing can affect your level of stress, muscle tension, fatigue, and even digestion?

What is Deep Breathing?

True deep breathing may seem unnatural to some. Stress, tension, and habit tend to build a pattern of shallow breathing, limiting air intake to the chest. Try these steps to engage in deep breathing.

1. Focus: take a moment to notice only yourself and your breathing.
2. Place one hand on your upper chest, and the other just below your rib cage.
3. Breathe slowly through your nose. Your stomach should move out against your hand as your belly expands in all directions.
4. Engage your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips.

Benefits of Breathing Exercises

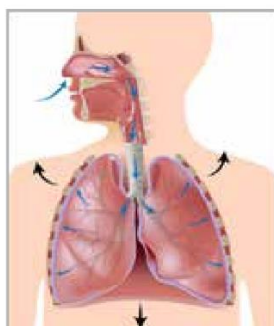
Stress Management	Breathing deeply, even for a short time, can reduce environmental stressors and allow you to focus.
Energy	Increasing the amount of oxygen in the lungs and blood results in bursts of energy.
Blood Pressure and Heart Rate	Breathing exercises show an almost immediate impact on blood pressure and heart rate, lowering both.
Brain Growth	When used in conjunction with meditation, deep breathing stimulates sensory input and attention.
Gene Expression	Relaxation benefits genes that support immune function, energy metabolism, and insulin secretion.



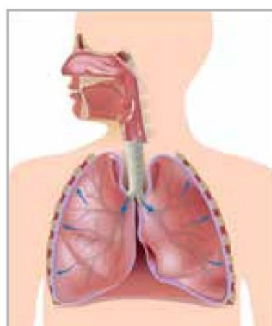
Try These Breathing Techniques

The 4:7:8 Technique: *can be used for calming and counteracting stress.*

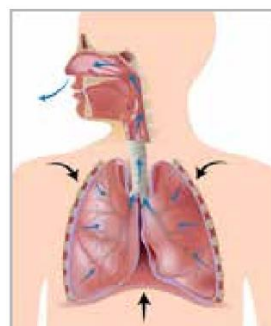
- Exhale completely through your mouth with your tongue behind the top row of your teeth,
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose for 4 counts.
- Hold your breath for a count of 7.
- Exhale completely through your mouth for 8 counts.
- This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.



Inhale for 4 counts



Hold for 7 counts



Exhale for 8 counts

Breath Counting: *can be used to counteract negative thoughts and induce relaxation.*

- To begin this exercise, count “one” to yourself as you exhale.
- The next time you exhale, count “two,” and so on, up to “five.”
- Then begin a new cycle, counting “one” on the next exhalation.

Never count higher than “five,” and count only when you exhale. Do 10 minutes of this for meditation.

