



Breath Breaks

Taking time to breathe with awareness and intention in small amounts daily can help you to decrease feelings of stress, increase your sense of calm, and bring health benefits into your body and mind.

Some benefits of mindful breathing include:

- Activates parasympathetic nervous system (switch from fight-or-flight into relaxation response)
- Lowers cholesterol
- Lowers blood pressure
- Increases immunity
- Improves sleep quality
- Increases energy
- Improves clarity and mental focus
- Decreases cortisol levels
- Reduces feelings of stress
- Increases feelings of calm
- Decreases feelings of anxiety / panic

Slow your breathing for maximum benefit:

- A slow and steady inhale increases your oxygen intake.
- A brief pause to hold your breath allows for oxygen saturation into your bloodstream.
- A slow and steady exhale expels as much carbon dioxide from your lungs as possible.

Simple Mindful Breathing

Mindful breathing doesn't have to be complicated. Simply finding a few moments to breathe with intention and awareness can bring benefits into your body and mind. Practice mindful breathing moments periodically through your day for maximum benefit.

1. To begin, simply notice how you are feeling in your physical body. Try to let go of any judgement about how you are feeling and focus on bringing in awareness.
2. Then notice how you are feeling in your head and heart. What emotions are you feeling at this moment? Again, try and decrease judgement and simply bring in awareness.
3. Take a nice deep breath in; fill up your lungs completely.
4. Pause and hold for a moment or two.
5. Release your breath in a slow and steady exhale; empty out your air completely.
6. Continue for several rounds of breath. Notice how you feel.

If you find it difficult to let go of your thoughts as you breathe, try focusing on something specific. You might try counting your breath. Or select a Mantra to focus on as you breathe (examples: I am calm, I am strong, etc.).

Mindful Breathing Exercises

Add some deeper mindful breathing into your daily routine by choosing one of the following to practice several times throughout your day. Or choose one to practice any time you are feeling the need to quickly find calm or decrease feelings of stress. Try to breathe mindfully: notice how you are feeling, relax your body and mind, focus on your breath.

Breath	Description	Benefit
Timed Breath	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Begin by counting your breath 2) Work toward an EVEN INHALE and EXHALE 3) Begin to slightly lengthen your EXHALE 4) Add a PAUSE at top of breath (after inhale) 5) Add a PAUSE at bottom of breath (after exhale) 6) Continue to breath in this manner: inhale, pause, longer exhale, pause, repeat 	<p>Calms the nervous system</p> <p>Improves mood</p>
Square Breath	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Visualize a square 2) INHALE, count your breath 3) PAUSE, same count 4) EXHALE, same count 5) PAUSE, same count 6) Repeat 	<p>Reduces stress</p> <p>Improves mood</p>
4-7-8 Breath	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Tip of tongue to roof of mouth behind front teeth 2) INHALE through NOSE for count of 4 3) HOLD breath for count of 7 4) EXHALE breath from MOUTH for count of 8 5) Immediately INHALE again, repeat 3-4 times 	<p>Decreases anxiety / feelings of stress</p> <p>Counters shallow breathing</p>
Alternate Nostril Breath (Nadi Shodhana)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Use RIGHT THUMB to CLOSE RIGHT NOSTRIL 2) INHALE through LEFT NOSTRIL 3) CLOSE LEFT NOSTRIL with RING FINGER so both nostrils are closed, PAUSE 4) OPEN RIGHT NOSTRIL and EXHALE slowly 5) INHALE through RIGHT NOSTRIL slowly 6) CLOSE RIGHT NOSTRIL with thumb so both nostrils are closed, PAUSE 7) OPEN LEFT NOSTRIL and EXHALE slowly 8) PAUSE briefly at bottom of EXHALE 9) Repeat 5-10 cycles 	<p>Clears the mind, helps with focus</p> <p>For energy and calm</p> <p>Improves your sense of well-being, restores balance</p> <p>Rejuvenates the nervous system</p>
Lion's Breath (Simhasana)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Lean back and INHALE deeply through nose 2) Open mouth and stick out tongue as you EXHALE loudly making 'ha' sound 3) Take gaze up and between eyebrows as you exhale 4) Extend tongue towards your chin 5) INHALE return to neutral face 6) Repeat 4-6 times 	<p>Relieves tension</p> <p>Improves circulation</p> <p>Energizing and awakening</p>
Ujjayi Breath	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Seal lips 2) INHALE through NOSE 3) EXHALE through NOSE 4) Work toward a feeling / sound at back of throat with each exhale (feeling of fogging a mirror) 5) Continue to breathe slow and steady in this manner 	<p>Calms the mind, strengthens the nervous system</p> <p>Creates / maintains energy</p> <p>Relieves tension</p>