



TAKE *a* deep BREATH

Breathe Easy

Stress Relief

Are you feeling stressed out these days? Worried, anxious or preoccupied with all of the news of doom and gloom? If so, just breathe easy. Okay, let's be real, most people aren't breathing too easy these days, with all of the negative talk about the economy, politics and other world issues. But breathing properly can actually help you reduce stress and anxiety.

Deep breathing provides many benefits, like: improved digestion, improved circulation, decreased stress, anxiety and depression, regulating heart rate, blood pressure and the nervous system, higher energy levels, and easier weight loss.

That's because deep breathing brings more oxygen to the blood, and transports carbon dioxide waste from the blood more thoroughly. This helps the heart pump richly oxygenated blood throughout the entire body.

This in turn nourishes all cells and helps remove their waste products more efficiently.

Most of us engage in shallow breathing. In other words, our lungs don't expand very full when we inhale and

exhale. Also, we tend to breathe upward instead of outward. This moves tension upward into shoulders, which are oftentimes already tight from everyday stress. Anyone hunched over at their computers reading this?!

Here's how to breathe deeply: Inhale deeply while pushing your belly outward; don't let your shoulders scrunch upward. You may try placing your hand on your stomach so you can feel your breath as it expands. Let your lungs fully expand outward, and imagine oxygen reaching the very bottom of your lungs. Exhale completely, pressing your belly inward; imagine pressing all the air out of the bottom of your lungs. Ahhhhh.

The great news is that you actually have the ability to help control stress, anxiety and many other symptoms by implementing distressing and relaxation techniques like deep breathing. If you practice this for just two or three minutes, you will immediately notice improved circulation, a slowing of your heart rate and a general sense of calm. Joining a yoga class can also help you practice your breath as well as reduce stress. Once you mindfully practice deep breathing over a period of time, it will naturally become the way you breathe.