

Stress Relief... Just A Breath Away

Did you know...

Taking slow, deep breaths is your most readily available tool for relieving stress. By bringing your awareness to your breath and taking several slow abdominal breaths, you can relieve physical and emotional tension.

Take a few minutes and try the following breath awareness exercise:

1. Sit comfortably in your chair.
2. Bring your attention to your breathing.
3. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose. Feel your abdomen expand as you breathe in (like a balloon inflating inside your belly).
4. Hold the breath for a few seconds.
5. Exhale slowly and completely through your nose or mouth. Feel your abdomen flatten as you breathe out (like a balloon deflating).
6. Repeat the exercise for several breaths.

Tips!

- *As you focus on your breath, distracting thoughts may wander through your mind. Simply notice them and then bring your attention back to your breath.*
- *Use each exhale as an opportunity to let go of any worries or concerns and release any physical tension you have been holding in your body.*
- *If you find it difficult to relax your abdomen as you breathe in, try this exercise while lying down for a few minutes each day. Placing your hands on your abdomen may help. After about six weeks of practice, abdominal breathing will become second nature.*

Learn. Laugh. Live with Less Stress.

Suggested Breathing Exercises

Quick Relief Breathing Exercises

Try one of the following exercises any time you notice worried thoughts.... when someone says something that bothers you... while in the dentist chair... when stuck in traffic... when you can't fall asleep... or whenever you want to feel more relaxed.

Yogic Relaxing Breath (4-7-8 breath)

Inhale slowly through your nose to the count of four. Allow the breath to rest lightly in your chest as you count to seven. Then exhale the breath through the mouth slowly and completely while mentally counting from eight down to one. Do this for several breaths.

8 Second Relaxation Breath

Breathing in and out of the nose, inhale slowly to the count of four, imagining the breath coming in through the soles of your feet and moving up to the top of your head. Exhale slowly counting from four down to one. Feel the breath move back down your body and out through your feet. Allow your face, jaw, and shoulders to release. If you wish, on the inbreath, mentally say "alert mind" and on the outbreath, mentally say "calm body" (or a phrase of your choosing). Repeat for several breaths.

Crocodile Pose

1. Lie on your stomach with your legs a comfortable distance apart.
2. Fold your arms in front of your body so that your hands rest on the opposite elbows. Rest your forehead on your forearms.
3. Bring your awareness to your breath and the movement of your belly.
4. Notice the rhythm of your breath and how the belly expands when you inhale and contracts when you exhale.
5. Rest in this position for at least a few minutes, following your breath in and out. With each exhale, feel yourself letting go just a little bit more.

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