

Breathing Exercises

To begin, sit comfortably. Remember to take your time with each exercise, moving slowly and breathing deeply.

1. Whole Body Breathing with Words

As you inhale each breath, imagine you are breathing in the air through each and every pore in your skin. Imagine your entire body as a sponge, soaking in the energy of the air around you. As you exhale, imagine you are pushing out your doubts, insecurities, negative beliefs, etc., whatever fits for you in the moment. Be as specific as possible. As you inhale, imagine you are soaking in positive energy. Maybe this energy is in the form of love, peace, compassion, etc. Again, be as specific as possible. Do this for 5-10 minutes.

2. Breath Counting

This breathing technique involves giving each breath, both inhale and exhale, a specific count. As you inhale a deep breath, think to yourself "1". As you slowly exhale that breath, think to yourself "2". As you inhale the next deep breath, think to yourself "3". As you slowly exhale that breath, think to yourself "4". Continue this count for a few minutes, increasing the count with each inhale and exhale until you reach a count of 50 or 100.

3. Square Breathing

Inhale, counting to four until you feel filled with breath. Hold this breath while counting to four. Be sure to keep your throat and chest relaxed. Exhale, counting to four until the lungs are empty. Hold the exhalation while counting to four. Do this at a pace that is comfortable for you. Continue to count, following the breath, for at least 4-6 cycles. As you practice this technique each day, try to gradually increase the length of time you spend following your breath.

4. 4-7-8 Breathing Technique

Empty your lungs of air. Breathe in quietly through your nose for 4 seconds. Hold the breath for a count of 7 seconds. Then exhale forcefully, through the mouth, pursing the lips and making a "whoosh" sound, for 8 seconds. Repeat this cycle for up to 4 times. It is recommended that you do this technique twice a day.

5. Belly Breathing

This is designed to relax the body by making sure you are breathing as deeply as possible. Most people breathe by moving the chest rather than the diaphragm. Place a hand on your abdomen, below your navel. Inhale slowly and deeply, feeling your abdomen rise beneath your hand as you fill with air. Exhale slowly, feeling your hand sink inward as you use your diaphragm to push the air out. Focus on using your diaphragm instead of your chest to move the air in and out of your body.