

Breathing to De-stress

The way you breathe affects your whole body. Full, deep breathing is a good way to reduce tension, feel relaxed, reduce stress, and help lower blood pressure.

Taking a deep breath is one of the easiest ways to relax and you can do it anytime and anywhere. Unfortunately, most of us are so stressed out all the time that we don't breathe correctly. We take shallow breaths from our chest and this can contribute to stress and anxiety.

Breathing is one of the few functions of the body that's controlled by the autonomic nervous system and we can control it whenever we want. Have you ever watched a baby breathe? Their bellies rise and fall, this is abdominally breathing. Adults tend to breathe into the upper part of the lungs known as chest-breathing. Breathing in deeply, the way a baby does, brings in about a gallon of air per breath compared to only about a half a pint when we chest breathe. This simple breathing exercise can help you fall asleep, deal with stressful events or even release anger without losing your temper.

To get started:

- Sit all the way back in your chair, nice and tall, feet flat on the ground.
- Place one hand on your abdomen and inhale through your nose letting the abdomen expand, filling it up with air.
- Breathe in through the nose, filling the belly with air and letting it expand;
- Breathe out through your mouth, contracting the belly and letting all the air out.
- Now slow that down a little bit – Breathe in to a count of four: 1...2...3...4 and Breathe out 1...2...3...4.
- Keep going – Breathe in to a count of four and then breathe out to a count of four.

Closing your eyes while doing this breathing exercise can help you to relax even more. Some people focus on a word like “calm” or “peace” on each inhalation and exhalation. Do two minutes of belly breathing anytime life or work gets a little crazy and you'll feel calmer and more in control.

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