

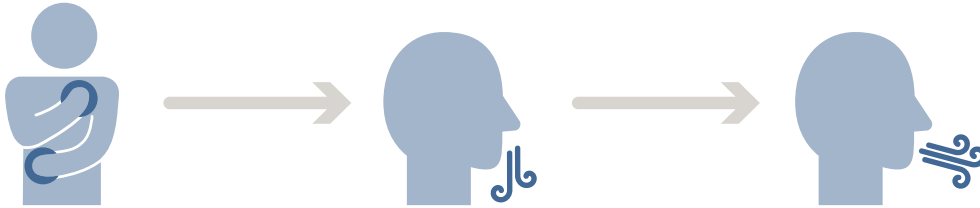
# GUIDE TO BREATHING TECHNIQUES

Deep breathing activates the body's calm-down mechanism. Even as little as one minute of deep breathing can lessen anxiety and reduce stress hormones in your bloodstream.

Below are three breathing methods worth trying. Experiment to see which best suits you, or devise your own.

## BELLY BREATHE

**TIP:** The hand on your belly should rise and fall, while the hand on your chest should barely move.



### 1. PLACE

Place one hand on your abdomen and one on your chest.

### 2. BREATHE

Breathe in through your nose, imagining you are filling your belly with air.

### 3. EXHALE

## BOX BREATHE

**TIP:** Imagine your breathing—with equal counts in, hold, out, pause—is like drawing a perfect square in the air.



### 1. BREATHE

Breathe in for four counts.

### 2. HOLD

Hold your breath for four counts (gently expanded, not tensed.)

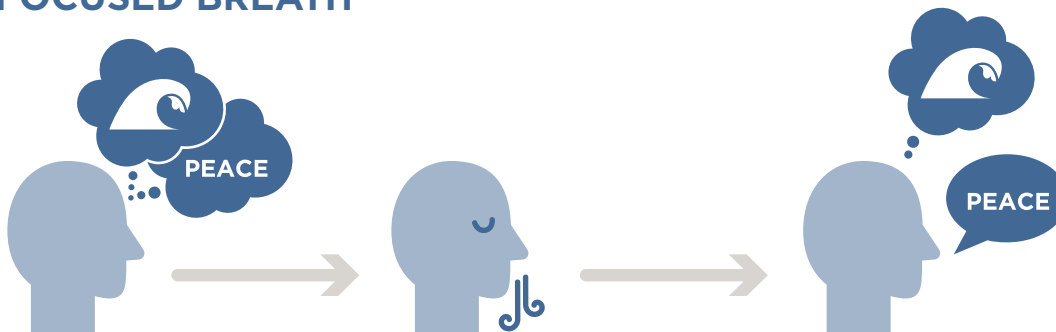
### 3. EXHALE

Exhale for four counts.

### 4. PAUSE

Pause for four counts, then begin your next inhale.

## FOCUSED BREATH



### 1. CHOOSE

Choose a soothing word, phrase or image to guide your breathing, for example "Peace", "Let go", or "Wave"

### 2. CLOSE

Close your eyes. Take a deep breath through your nose.

### 3. EXHALE

Exhale while saying the word or phrase or picturing your soothing image.

# 4 - 7 - 8 Breath

## Relaxation Exercise

A patient handout from Dr. Andrew Weil. This is a very simple and useful tool to achieve general relaxation and to manage stress.

### Beginner Tips:

*Ideally, sit with your back straight.*

*Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth, and keep it there through the entire exercise.*

*Exhale through your mouth around your tongue; try pursing your lips slightly if this seems awkward*

### Anyone can do it...

- Simple
- Quick
- No equipment needed
- Do it anywhere

### STEPS

- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a *whoosh* sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of **4**.
- Hold your breath for a count of **7**.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of **8**.
- This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

### Are the numbers important?

The absolute time you spend on each phase is not important; the ratio of 4:7:8 is important. If you have trouble holding your breath, speed the exercise up but keep to the ratio of 4:7:8 for the three phases. With practice you can slow it all down and get used to inhaling and exhaling more and more deeply.

### Why should I do it?

This exercise is a natural tranquilizer for the nervous system. Unlike tranquilizing drugs, which are often effective when you first take them but then lose their power over

time, this exercise is subtle when you first try it but gains in power with repetition and practice. Use this new skill whenever anything upsetting happens - before you react. Use it whenever you are aware of internal tension. Use it to help you fall asleep.

### How often?

Do it at least twice a day. You cannot do it too frequently. Do not do more than four breaths at one time for the first month of practice. Later, if you wish, you can extend it to eight breaths. If you feel a little lightheaded when you first breathe this way, do not be concerned - it will pass.