

# BREATHING

## ACTIVATE YOUR BUILT-IN STRESS BUSTER

### HOW CAN BREATHING HELP WITH STRESS?

Intentional breathing helps you relax and manage everyday stress. Practicing simple breathing techniques can increase your focus and refresh your mind.

How are you using breathing techniques in your life right now?

  
  

### WHAT'S MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?

- **Decreased stress levels.** Taking deep breaths slows you down and may help reduce the level of stress hormones in your body.
- **Clearer thinking.** Being calm may help you make better decisions.
- **Happier moods.** There's no denying that reducing tension makes you feel better.
- **Improved concentration.** Breathing can help you focus your attention.
- **Increased productivity.** When you feel better, you work better.

### TRY THIS AT HOME

Use your breathing to change how you feel. Try a “square breath”—so named because it has four equal parts. Count to four while breathing in and hold for the count of four. Then breathe out to the count of four and hold for four.

### FIVE WAYS TO GET STARTED



**Take in some air.** When you're stressed, stop for a moment to take deep, cleansing breaths.



**Try mindful walking.** Walk slowly and focus on your breathing, counting the number of steps you take as you inhale and exhale.



**Yoga.** If you've never tried it, look for a class. (Some places let you try one for free.) Focus on the measured breathing used with the poses.



**Count down from 20,** then count back up—focusing on your breathing throughout. This technique may help clear your mind.



**Repeat a phrase while breathing deeply.** A phrase like: “I am at peace; all is well now” can help you calm down.

**REALLY? I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!**

- In a study on breathing and relaxation, shallow breathing made all participants feel more anxious.
- People who practice deep breathing report less stress, fewer negative feelings and better concentration.
- Deep breathing can help smokers who are quitting cope with nicotine withdrawal symptoms and cravings.
- Breathing can give the mind a chance to rest, just like the body—and without it, productivity can suffer.



**PLAN FOR YOUR ROADBLOCKS**

We all encounter roadblocks from time to time. Try planning ahead with this technique recommended by personal-change experts: First, envision the benefits of reaching your goal—starting with your personal vision. Then, imagine your biggest roadblocks and how you'll get past them.

ROADBLOCK	STRATEGY
I often feel scattered and overwhelmed.	When I feel this way, I'll take a mindful walk to clear my head.

**WRITE YOUR PERSONAL VISION**

Create a short phrase capturing a benefit of intentional breathing—whichever benefit is most important to you. Say it anytime you start to veer from your new path.

**Example:** When I'm focused on my breathing, I think more clearly.

**My personal vision**

**WHO SUPPORTS YOU IN YOUR EFFORTS TOWARD INTENTIONAL BREATHING?**

---



---