



# Slow Down; Deep Breaths



We take about 20,000 breaths a day—yet the truth is, putting just a little more intention into your breath can have a powerful impact on your health. Practicing breath work for a few minutes a day has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety and support people managing conditions like asthma, high blood pressure, and heart disease. What makes breath work so unique is that as explained by David Spiegel of Stanford Medicine, breathing is usually automatic—like your heartbeat or digestion—but you can easily take control of it. When you do, you directly influence your stress response and overall physiology.

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## 1. Belly Breathing (Diaphragmatic Breathing)

This exercise lets full oxygen exchange and activates your relaxation response.

1. Sit upright comfortably and close your eyes if you'd like.
2. Place one hand on your chest and one on your stomach.
3. Breathe slowly through your nose into your belly. Feel your stomach rise.
4. Exhale slowly and completely, feeling your belly fall.
5. Repeat for about 5 minutes.

## **2. Equal-Length Breathing**

This technique improves focus and balances your nervous system.

1. Sit upright comfortably.
2. Inhale through your nose for a count of four.
3. Exhale through your nose for a count of four.
4. As it becomes easier, increase the count to six or eight seconds.
5. Continue for several minutes.

## **3. Alternate-Nostril Breathing**

This method promotes calm, balance, and mental clarity.

1. Bend your index and middle fingers toward your palm, leaving your thumb, ring, and pinky extended.
2. Close your right nostril with your thumb and inhale through the left.
3. Close your left nostril with your ring finger.
4. Exhale through the right nostril, then inhale through the right.
5. Close the right nostril and exhale through the left.
6. Repeat for several minutes.

## **4. Box Breathing**

Popular for stress management, this technique builds focus and resilience.

1. Sit upright with a straight back.
2. Inhale deeply through your belly for a count of four.
3. Hold your breath for four.

4. Exhale completely for four.
5. Hold again for four before the next inhale.
6. Repeat for 5–10 minutes.

Your breath is one of the simplest and most powerful tools for improving your health. With just a few minutes a day, you can reduce stress, support lung function, improve oxygen delivery, and create a calmer, clearer state of mind. Sometimes the most powerful reset isn't complicated—it's as simple as slowing down and breathing on purpose.

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**Sources:** Hadley Leggett: *A Five-Minute Breathing Exercise for Anxiety and Mood*. Greater Good Magazine (2023)

[https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/a\\_five\\_minute\\_breathing\\_exercise\\_for\\_anxiety\\_and\\_mood](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/a_five_minute_breathing_exercise_for_anxiety_and_mood)

KinderCare: *Keep Calm: 4 Easy Breathing Techniques to Help You Stay Centered*.

<https://www.kindercare.com/content-hub/articles/2016/june/keep-calm-carry-on-4-easy-breathing-techniques-to-help-you-stay-centered>