

Mindful Breathing 1

Shallow breathing may lead to tension and fatigue. Breathing with your diaphragm tends to reduce stress and improve energy.

Abdominal breathing, also known as *diaphragmatic breathing*, is a powerful way to decrease stress by activating relaxation centers in the brain. The abdominal expansion causes negative pressure to pull blood into the chest, improving the venous flow of blood back to the heart.

- Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down, with your feet slightly apart, one hand on your abdomen near the navel, and the other hand on your chest.
- Gently exhale the air in your lungs through your mouth, then inhale slowly through your nose to the count of 4, pushing out your abdomen slightly and concentrating on your breath. As you breathe in, imagine warm air flowing all over your body. Hold the breath for a count of at least 4 but not more than 7.
- Slowly exhale through your mouth while counting to 8. Gently contract your abdominal muscles to completely release the remaining air in the lungs.
- Repeat until you feel deeply relaxed for a total of 5 cycles. You may be able to do only 1 or 2 cycles at first.
- Once you feel comfortable with your ability to breathe into the abdomen, it is not necessary to use your hands on your abdomen and chest.

There may be an added benefit of lowering blood pressure when you place your tongue on the ridge of the roof of your mouth, just behind your teeth.

Mindful Breathing Exercises 2

Mindful Breathing Phase 1:

1. Sit in a comfortable position. Try to sit in the same place each day. Avoid positions that you might fall asleep in.
 - a. The back is long and supports itself.
 - b. Shoulders are relaxed downward, the neck is long, and the chin is pointing neither up nor down.
 - c. The face is relaxed.
2. Inhale. Expand the belly, expand the ribs, and then let the breath rise all the way into the shoulders and collarbones. Feel a slight movement in the collarbones and shoulders as the breath moves upward. Exhale and feel the shoulders fall, ribs move back toward center, and belly move back into the spine. Do this for a minute or two.
3. Now focus on the breath as it enters and exits the nostrils. Feel the coolness of the breath as it enters, the warmth as it exits. Listen for the slight sound of the breath as it enters and exits. Feel the movement of the breath on the delicate skin at the rim of the nostrils.
4. When the mind wanders or a sound or sensation distracts you, return to the breath. Do this over and over as many times as you need to.
5. Start with 5 minutes, then increase the time until you can sit for 10, then 15, then 20 minutes.

Mindful Breathing Phase Two:

1. When you can do the three-part breath comfortably, create a valve at the larynx to make a gentle hissing sound as you exhale. When you whisper, you make this same valve.
2. Begin to prolong the exhalation. Work toward making the exhalation twice as long as the inhalation. Take your time in cultivating this lengthening of the exhalation. The breath should remain gentle and rhythmic.
3. Now focus on the breath as it enters and exits the nostrils. Feel the coolness of the breath as it enters, the warmth as it exits. Listen for the slight sound of the breath as it enters and exits. Feel the movement of the breath on the delicate skin at the rim of the nostrils.
4. When the mind wanders or a sound or sensation distracts you, return to the breath. Do this over and over as many times as you need to.
5. Start with 5 minutes, then increase the time until you can sit for 10, then 15, then 20 minutes.

Mindful Breathing Phase Three:

1. Begin to notice as you do the above breath that there are four phases to the breath:
 - a. Inhalation
 - b. A pause between inhalation and exhalation
 - c. Exhalation
 - d. A pause between exhalation and inhalation
2. Try and live inside the pauses for just a moment, less than a second. Bring your entire attention inside the pause before you begin either the inhalation or exhalation.
3. Now focus on the breath as it enters and exits the nostrils. Feel the coolness of the breath as it enters, the warmth as it exits. Listen for the slight sound of the breath as it enters and exits. Feel the movement of the breath on the delicate skin at the rim of the nostrils. Bring this same attention to all four phases of the breath.
4. When the mind wanders or a sound or sensation distracts you, return to the breath. Do this over and over as many times as you need to.
5. Start with 5 minutes, then increase the time until you can sit for 10, then 15, then 20 minutes.

Mindfulness Breathing Exercises 3

Mindfulness Meditation Instructions:

1. Sit in a comfortable position. Try to sit in the same place each day. Avoid positions that you might fall asleep in.
 - a. The back is long and supports itself.
 - b. Shoulders are relaxed downward, the neck is long, and the chin is pointing neither up nor down.
 - c. The face is relaxed.
2. Begin to breathe (preferably through the nostrils). Feel the belly rise, the ribs expand, and the slight movement in the collarbones and shoulders as the breath moves upward. Feel the exhalation.
3. Focus on one aspect of the breath:
 - a. The movement of air in and out of the nostrils
 - b. Or the lifting and falling of the belly
4. Watch that one aspect of the breath.
 - a. When the mind wanders, gently bring it back to the breath and the aspect you have chosen to watch.
 - b. Do this as many times as you need to.
 - c. There is no such thing as a good or bad meditation. (Good and bad are judgments, events in the mind—just note them and go back to the breathing.)
5. Start with 5–10 minutes and then increase the time until you can sit for 30 minutes.