

# Mindfulness Breathing Techniques



During these uncertain times, many of us may be feeling more anxious and stressed than usual and looking for ways to self-soothe. Thankfully, one of the most effective, long-standing therapies to manage stress is not only cost effective, but is accessible to everyone—'Regulated Breathing'. Regulated breathing (or deep breathing) has been recognized for centuries as a way to quiet a racing mind and relieve stress. This is because the way you breathe affects your whole body. Inhaling deeply, followed by a slow exhale, sends a calming message to your brain and other organs, which helps to manage the stress response.

While there are many types of deep breathing exercises, the hallmarks of an effective practice include: slowed respiration rate, an exhale that is longer than the inhale and a breath that starts deep in the abdomen as opposed to high in the throat. The following exercises are examples intended to help you practice deep breathing, however, we encourage you to find a sequence that feels the most comfortable to you and helps you reach a calm, relaxed state.

## Deep Breathing

1. Put one hand on your stomach while sitting or standing with your back straight. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose. Let your breath fill your lungs paying attention to your hand resting on your stomach as it rises.
2. Breathe out slowly and completely, through your mouth. Focus on your hand as it falls back into your belly.
3. Repeat this cycle of breathing for a full two minutes, make sure to keep your attention on your hand as it rises and falls.

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This technique should help to quiet your mind, but you may also feel a release of tension from your body and a relaxing calmness. This is essentially your way of resetting your mind and body called belly breathing.

## 4-7-8 Breathing

1. Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue behind your upper front teeth and keep it there. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
2. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose, count to four in your head.
3. Hold your breath for a count of seven.
4. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound, for a count of eight.
5. This is one breathing cycle. Repeat the cycle three times for a total of four cycles.

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With this breathing technique you will always inhale quietly through the nose and exhale audibly through the mouth, while your tongue stays in position the whole time to make the whoosh sound. Exhaling should take twice as long as inhaling, although the exact time is unimportant. If you find yourself having trouble holding your breath, shorten the duration but keep the ratio 4:7:8. Use this technique when you are aware of internal tension or stressors, or to help you fall asleep.