Breathing Exercises

Support/Crisis Counseling/Resources: femafrontline@gmail.com
Instagram: @njhh_gsappfrontline
Benefits of Breathing Exercises

- Lower Stress in the Mind and Body
- Reduce Tension
- Lower Heart Rate
- Lower Blood Pressure
- Improve Diabetic Symptoms
- Better Manage Chronic Pain
- Reduce Depressive Symptoms
- Better Regulate Body’s Reaction to Stress & Fatigue
- Reduce the Possibility of Burnout for Caregivers
Why Breathwork Matters – Dr. Andrew Weil

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SclZwqr5xpE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SclZwqr5xpE)

- Breathing is the only thing we can do consciously and unconsciously.
  - For this reason, it offers a chance to influence the involuntary nervous system.

- Involuntary Nervous System (INS):
  - *Sympathetic: ‘Fight or Flight’. Parasympathetic: ‘Rest and Digest’*
  - Both should be in **balance**. In today’s society, the sympathetic nervous system often runs on overdrive due to daily stressors, environmental stimulation, etc. leading to circulatory and digestive issues along with other chronic illnesses.

- Breathing techniques enable us to balance these INS functions
  - **HOW?**
    - By becoming aware of our breathing and making our breaths deeper, slower, and regular
Box Breathing

- Based on pranayama, an ancient yogic technique
- Helps gain control over your breathing
- Regular practice helps with falling asleep faster

Steps:

1. Slowly exhale all the air in your lungs out.
2. Gently inhale through your nose to a slow count of 4.
3. Hold at the top of the breath for a count of 4.
5. At the bottom of the breath, pause and hold for a count of 4.
“Alternate Nostril” Breathing

- Calms your mind
- Increases focus
- Relaxes your nerves
- Helps with meditation
- Balances left and right sides of the brain

Steps:


3. Switch nostrils.

4. Repeat 6-10 times.

4-7-8

- Focuses and calms the mind
- Provides a sense of control which helps to soothe anxiety and improve mindset
- Physiological affect: increased oxygen makes the body think your mind is relaxed and encourages a resting heart rate
- “A natural tranquilizer for the nervous system” – Dr. Andrew Weil

**Steps:**

1. Inhale quietly through your nose for a count of 4.
2. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
3. Exhale through your mouth to the count of 8, while making an audible ‘whoosh’ sound.
4. Repeat this cycle a total of 4 times.

https://www.thedeepsleepco.com/4-7-8-breathing/
“Skull-Shining” Breathing

- Forceful exhalations help unclog the respiratory tract, helping in breathing easily
- Energizes the nervous system
- Improves blood circulation
- Can help relieve cold symptoms
- Generates heat within the body which can help rid the body and harmful toxins

**Steps:**

1. Take a deep breath in.

2. As you exhale, pull your navel in backwards towards the spine (You may keep a right hand on your stomach to feel the abdominal muscles contract as you pull your navel in).

3. As you relax the navel and abdomen, breath flows into your lungs automatically.

4. Take 20 such breaths.

https://yogatechnics.wordpress.com/2016/03/11/yoga-poses-for-a-cold/
Diaphragmatic Breathing/Belly Breathing

- Encourages full oxygen exchange
- Relieves tension
- Slows the heartbeat
- Can stabilize blood pressure

Steps:

1. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other on your belly.

2. Breathe in slowly through your nose for a count of 6, letting the air in deeply, towards your lower belly. The hand on your chest should remain still, while the one on your belly should rise.

3. Tighten your abdominal muscles and let them fall inward as you exhale through pursed lips for a count of 6. The hand on your belly should move down to its original position.

4. Repeat for 5-10 minutes.

Tips for Practicing Breathing Exercises

• **Become aware of your breath.**
  Your breath and your body exist in the present. Use them to stay grounded in the present moment.

• **Adopt good posture.**
  Ensure that your back is upright, and your shoulders are back and down. Raise your chin and jaw slightly, with your shoulders and neck relaxed.

• **Use your nose.**
  This helps to filter pollutants, allergens and toxins as we inhale, and warms and humidifies the air. Mouth-breathing increases the volume of air and this can lead to over-breathing and increased anxiety.

• **De-stress.**
  Especially when feeling anxious, give yourself time and space to calm the mind and body with breathing. Introduce activities such as walking, coloring, listening to sounds or music. Engage your senses and breathe.