



Diane Abdo, Psy.D.

Heart of Happiness Webinar

"Practicing regular, mindful breathing can be calming and energizing and can even help with stress-related health problems ranging from panic attacks to digestive disorders."

Andrew Weil, M.D.

Breathing Techniques

These breathing techniques should be practiced regularly if possible to receive the most benefit. Start with diaphragmatic breathing and practice it regularly. As you feel comfortable with it move on to full yogic breathing and then lastly to alternate nostril breathing. Each technique can be used on its own to help you with stress reduction or in conjunction with other stress relieving techniques.

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Diaphragmatic Breathing is belly breathing. It triggers the relaxation response, slows the breathing rate, decreasing the work of the lungs and the demand for oxygen, decreases the effort needed for breathing while strengthening the lungs, diaphragm, and immune system.

1. Close your eyes, keeping your mouth closed, inhale slowly through your nose. Push your belly out as you inhale so you are getting a full breath.
2. Now as slowly as possible exhale through your nose (mouth closed) concentrate on bringing your belly button towards your spine.
3. Repeat until you feel your stress melt away.

Full Yogic Breathing

Full yogic breathing is a form of breathing that utilizes abdominal, mid and upper chest breath. It releases tension, either acute or chronic, that may have accumulated, can help overcome shortness of breath and asthma, strengthens the cardio vascular system and stimulates the nervous system, reduces anxiety and mental stress, helps to expel toxins from the body, increases the quantity of red blood cells, and improves stamina and vitality.

1. Start with Diaphragmatic Breathing - Close your eyes, keeping your mouth closed, inhale slowly through your nose. Push your belly out as you inhale so you are getting a full breath. Now as slowly as possible exhale through your nose (mouth closed) concentrate on bringing your belly button towards your spine, repeat several times.
2. Then inhale slowly through your nose pushing your belly out, then inhale a little deeper filling your chest. Now as slowly as possible, exhale through your nose (mouth closed) emptying your belly then your chest. Repeat several times.
3. Lastly, inhale deeply fill your belly, then your chest, then take one more slurp of air filling up to your (metaphoric) ears. Now slowly with control exhale all the air out of your belly and your chest. Repeat several times.
4. Then, breathe gently for several moments feeling the calm of your oxygenated body.

Alternate Nostril Breathing

Alternate Nostril Breathing is a form of deep, methodical breathing. It can trigger deep relaxation by clearing the mind and calming the body. It helps to balance the left and right hemispheres of the brain (linear thinking with creative thinking), alleviates headaches, calms anxiety and tense mental states, regulates the heating and cooling cycles of the body as well as the balances the wake cycles and sleep cycles.

1. Alternate nostril breathing should not be practiced if you have a cold or if your nasal passages are blocked in any way.
2. Tuck your index and middle finger into the palm of your right hand. Place the thumb by your right nostril and your ring and little fingers by your left.
3. Close the right nostril with your right thumb and inhale through the left nostril. Do this to the count of four seconds.
4. Immediately close the left nostril with your right ring finger and little finger, and at the same time remove your thumb from the right nostril, and exhale through this nostril. Do this to the count of eight seconds. This completes a half round.
5. Inhale through the right nostril to the count of four seconds. Close the right nostril with your right thumb and exhale through the left nostril to the count of eight seconds. This completes one full round.
6. Complete six to eight rounds, then keeping your eyes closed, lower your right hand, and breathe gently for several minutes feeling the calm.

Contributed by: Lena Berchielli, MBA, Certified Yoga Instructor