

# Three Breathing Exercises to Help Reduce Stress



Since breathing is something we can control and regulate, it is a useful tool for achieving a relaxed and clear state of mind. Try these the next time you're feeling tired or anxious.

## #1 The Stimulating Breath

Also called the Bellows Breath, this diaphragmatic breathing exercise aims to increase alertness. Try it the next time you need an energy boost.

- Inhale and exhale rapidly through your nose, keeping your mouth closed but relaxed. Your breaths in and out should be equal in duration, but as short as possible.
- Try for three in-and-out breath cycles per second. This produces a quick movement of the diaphragm.
- Do this for 10-15 seconds on your first try. Each time you practice, you can increase your time by five seconds or so until you reach a full minute.

## #2 The Relaxing Breath

Also called the 4-7-8 Breath, this technique is a natural tranquilizer for the nervous system. Try it whenever you feel internal tension or stress, or to help you fall asleep.

- Place the tip of your tongue against the ridge of tissue just behind your upper front teeth and keep it there for the entire exercise.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight.
- Repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

## #3 Breath Counting

This simple meditation technique involves counting slow, rhythmic inhalations and exhalations. Its purpose is to pull the mind away from distractions. Try it for 10 minutes.

- Sit in a comfortable position and gently close your eyes. Let the breath come naturally. Ideally it will be quiet and slow.
- To begin, count one to yourself as you exhale. The next time you exhale, count two, and so on up to five. Count only when you exhale.
- Begin a new cycle, counting one on the next exhalation. You'll know your attention has wandered if you find yourself counting higher than five.

For more breathing tips and to watch Dr. Andrew Weil demonstrate these techniques, [click here](#).