

1



Easy Breathing Exercises

For moments of calm at your desk

WHAT? Take a mindful breathing break several times during your day. Stop what you are doing and bring your focus to your breath.

HOW? Sit comfortably. Remain upright, but relax your spine. Sink your weight into your sitting bones. Let your chair hold and support you from underneath. Feet rest on the floor.

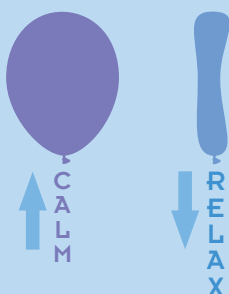
WHY? Mindful breathing for a few moments helps your mind to calm and your body to relax. It's a way of helping to de-stress and self-regulate.

a

A Science based Mantra

1 As you breathe in, silently say "Inhale calm" to yourself. Note: that is 3 syllables. No need to strain or force. Close your eyes if possible.

2 As you breathe out, silently say "Exhale relax" to yourself. Note: that is 4 syllables. Continue for several minutes. Melt your body on each out breath.



3 Inhalation is related to the sympathetic nervous system and the flight-fight response. Exhalation is related to the parasympathetic nervous system (rest & digest response). By elongating the exhalation you move away from flight-fight towards rest-digest, calming your nervous system.

b

Belly Breathing

1 As you breathe in, let your belly go! Yes, really! Soften and allow expansion in the belly and pelvic floor.

2 As you exhale the pelvic floor and abdominals gently recoil together to push the air out.



Try this: Breathe in through the nose. When you breathe out, pretend you are breathing out of a straw in your mouth. This will slow down and even out your exhalation, and you may get a better sense of the gentle contraction of the pelvic floor and belly.

c

Rib Expansion

1 You just learned to let the belly go in the exercise above. Now you can add an expansion in the ribs.

2 You can imagine a balloon gently inflating in your chest as you breathe in. Each time you breathe in, imagine an even and gentle expansion, in 360 ° (back/front/sides) in your rib cage. The balloon softly deflates as you breathe out.



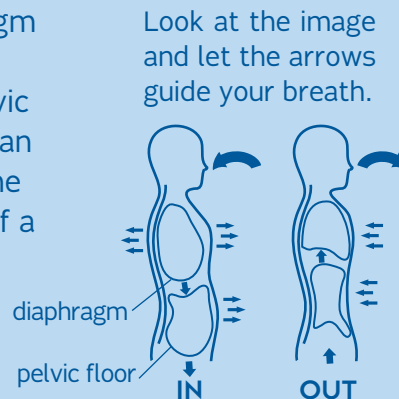
Easy Breathing Exercises

For moments of calm at your desk



Putting it all together - belly and ribs (b&c)

- 1 When you breathe in, the ribs expand in 360°, the diaphragm pushes down; the belly and waist move out and the pelvic floor moves down. There is an expansion outwards from the centre of your body. It's as if a balloon inflates within to fill the entire trunk.

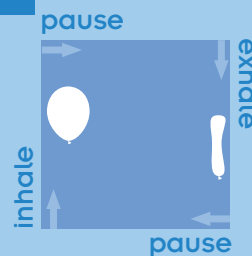


- 2 When you breathe out the pelvic floor and abdominals recoil together to push the air out, and the ribs deflate. Breathe out as if through a straw, again slowly, smoothly and evenly to feel the gentle action of the abdominals and pelvic floor. Don't strain or suck in. It is subtle. When you feel this connection return to breathing out through the nose.



Square Breathing

- 1 Look at the square shape. Starting at the bottom left corner, inhale and follow the arrow to the top left.



- 2 At the end of the inhalation - PAUSE - and follow the arrow to the top right. From the top right exhale as you follow the arrow down to the bottom right. At the end of the exhalation - PAUSE - and follow the arrow to the bottom left. Repeat a few times, building up to a few minutes.

- 3 You can close your eyes and imagine the square. If your pauses feel uncomfortable, make the shape a rectangle to reduce them. You can give the sides a count - say 2 or 4 (adjust to comfort). Make sure you don't create strain. Relax your eyes at the end.



Alternate Nostril Breathing

- 1 **OVERVIEW:** You will inhale through one nostril and exhale through the other, exchanging thumb and little finger accordingly to close off the other nostril. Right hand to face. Index/middle fingers rest between brows. The thumb will close/open one nostril, the little finger will close/open the other.
- 2 Thumb closes right nostril. BREATHE IN through left nostril. Thumb releases and little finger closes left nostril. BREATHE OUT through the right nostril.
- 3 Now breathe IN through the right nostril and OUT through the left. Repeat several times.



Direct the flow of air upwards in the nostrils, as if towards your fingers. Soften your throat, neck and chest.