

Snooze Inducing Breathing Techniques

Belly Breathing Technique

The first technique you need to learn to do is what's called "belly breathing". This is the most basic of the breathing methods we have at our disposal, and therefore is the one you should master before trying out the others. It's very simple, and requires just a few steps:

1. Sit down comfortably, or lay down on a yoga mat, depending on personal preference.
2. Place one hand on your stomach, just below your ribcage. Place the second hand on the center of your chest.
3. Breathe in deeply through your nostrils and let your first hand be pushed out by your stomach. Your chest should remain stationary.
4. Breathe out through your lips, pursing them as if you were about to whistle. Gently guide the hand on your stomach inwards, helping to press out the breath.
5. Slowly repeat between 3 and 10 times.

Continue for as long as you feel necessary. After you have mastered this breathing exercise, there are three additional methods for you to try, ranging in difficulty.

The 4-7-8 Breathing Technique

The method which we call "4-7-8 breathing" also requires you to be sitting or lying down comfortably. Here are the steps you need to follow:

1. Get into the belly breathing exercise position, with one hand on your stomach and one on your chest.
2. Breathe in slowly but deeply. Take 4 seconds to breathe in, feeling your stomach move in the process.
3. Hold your breath for 7 seconds.
4. Breathe out for 8 seconds, as silently as you can manage. Once you reach a count of 8, you should have completely emptied your lungs of air.
5. Repeat as many times as you need, making sure to stick to the 4-7-8 pattern.

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Roll Breathing Technique:

This method is great for those looking for a relaxation breathing exercise that can be done comfortably while sitting. Its aim is not just to relax, but also to encourage the full use of your lung capacity.

Beginners are advised to lie down, but after your first time, you should find these steps just as easy to complete this exercise while sitting:

1. Get into the belly breathing position, with your left hand on your stomach, and right hand over your chest.
2. Take a deep, slow breath from your lower lungs, ensuring that the hand over your chest doesn't move as you take the breath. Use your nose to breathe in, and exhale using your mouth.
3. Repeat this diaphragmatic breathing up to 8 times. On the ninth repetition – once you have filled your lower lungs – take a breath that will move your chest up, as you would normally breathe. This will fill your entire lung capacity.
4. Gently exhale through your mouth, being sure to completely empty your lungs. While you exhale, make a small “whooshing” noise. You should notice that both of your hands move back towards your body as both your stomach and chest fall.
5. Practice this method for between 4 and 5 minutes. With each exhalation, you should be able to feel a marked difference in your stress levels.

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Deep Muscle Relaxation with Belly Breathing:

This progressive muscle relaxation technique is more involved than the others in this list, but combined with the correct breathing technique, progressive muscle relaxation is a wonderful exercise to fully relax the body, and is fantastic to conduct before bedtime.

This exercise requires tensing specific muscle groups for 5-10 seconds, though never to the point of pain or cramping. Release the tension and observe the feelings of relaxation that radiate. Be sure to pay the most attention to muscles causing discomfort or ache.

Be sure to conduct this stretch with belly breathing, which will help you attain the relaxation response.

To start, sit down in a comfortable position and focus on your belly breathing, closing your eyes if need be. When you have found a rhythm:

1. Starting with your face, knit your eyebrows together and purse your lips. Try to pull your facial muscles toward your nose for 15-20 seconds and release.
2. Your jaw holds a great deal of pressure. To relieve some of it, clench your jaw for five seconds and release, letting the stress dissipate.
3. For your neck and shoulders, shrug your shoulders in the direction of your ears and hold, concentrating on the tension. Let it dissolve. Spend 15 seconds recovering before tilting your chin to your chest for another 5-10 seconds.
4. Pull your forearms towards your shoulders while flexing your upper arm muscles. Hold for five seconds and release, while imagining the stress melting away.
5. Move your focus to your abdomen by squeezing your stomach muscles. Hold for five seconds and relax. Repeat while paying special attention to your chest.
6. To de-stress your legs, first tense the muscles in your thighs and buttocks. Relax and recover. Next, your lower legs can be stretched, point your toes downward and holding for five seconds.