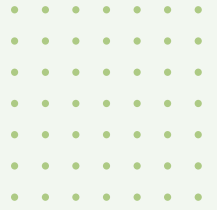


# Breathing Strategies

## to Effectively Manage Anxiety



It may seem strange to use breathing techniques as a means of managing anxiety, yet there is solid evidence to suggest that it can be highly effective. Your breathing is the only aspect of your physiology that you can consciously control with ease.

### You can't consciously:

- Alter your digestion.
- Change your blood pressure.
- Decide where your body is going to store fat.
- Alter the level of hormones in your blood.

But you can control your breathing. You can breathe faster, slower, deeply, or shallowly. You can change your breathing at will. However, you just can't say to yourself, "I'm going to reduce my blood pressure by 10 points," and make it happen.

Your breathing has a great effect on your physiology. Using the power of your breath can be an effective way of managing your anxiety. Best of all, it's free and always available to you.

**Follow these strategies to use your breath to manage your anxiety:**

# 1 Box breathing

*This technique has been around for thousands of years in various traditions, and is even endorsed by the U.S. Navy SEALs.*

- **Close your eyes** and evaluate your normal breathing pattern. Notice how many seconds you spend breathing in and how long you spend breathing out. Do this for just a minute or two.
- **Now, slowly** count from 1-4 as you inhale through your nose. It's fine to breathe through your mouth if your nose is stuffy.
- **Hold** for another count of 4.
- **Exhale** for the same 1-4 count.
- **Hold again** for a count of 4.
- Neither your inhalations or exhalations should be overly full. Just **breathe comfortable**, full breaths.
- **Keep the counts** of your inhalations and exhalations the same. Repeat for 5-10 minutes.

# 2 Long exhale

*This is a great breathing technique if you're feeling panicked. It's a very effective way to combat the effects of hyperventilation.*

## Part 1

- **Extend your exhalations** for as long as you can. Try to squeeze out as much air as possible without making yourself miserable.
- **Then, relax** and allow your lungs to naturally fill with air. You can do this by simply relaxing. It's not necessary to actively inhale. If you've exhaled completely, your lungs will fill with air if you just relax. Continue for five full minutes.

**After five minutes have passed, try this next exercise for an additional five minutes:**

## Part 2

**Exhale for twice as long as you inhale.** Three seconds in, and six seconds out is a good starting point. Try longer and shorter timeframes and see what effect it has.

### 3 Belly breathing

*This is one of the more popular breathing techniques to enhance feelings of wellbeing.*

- **Lie down** and put one or both hands on your belly.
- **Take a full, deep breath** (you'll feel your belly rise) and hold it for a short period of time. How long is up to you. Start with just a count of one and extend it as you see fit.
- **Relax** and allow your body to naturally expel the air. You're not intending to exhale. You're just relaxing and allowing nature to take its course.
- **Pause** again for as long as you like.
- **Repeat.** Again, 5-10 minutes is sufficient, but you can always go longer if you like.

### 4 Alternate nostril breathing

*This is another breathing technique that people seem to either love or hate. It's a little more complicated, so it can be distracting. This is great if you need a distraction from your anxiety.*

- Breathe normally, but only use **one nostril at a time**. Gently place your finger over one nostril, and then inhale and exhale through the other nostril.
- After you complete one breath cycle, **close off your other nostril** and repeat the process with the other side.
- This process can be **combined with any other breathing technique**. Play around with it and see what works for you.

These are just a few examples of breathing techniques that can be utilized to minimize anxiety.

*Harness the power of your breath and take control of your body, mind, and emotions. Learn how to use your breath to your advantage. The answer to your anxiety might already be within you.*