

Let's Talk About...

Breathing techniques

Learning breathing techniques can help you relax and feel more comfortable. It can also help you strengthen your lungs and make it easier to breathe. You'll learn about diaphragmatic (belly) breathing, focused breathing, paced breathing, and square breathing.

What is diaphragmatic breathing?

Diaphragmatic breathing is a technique that strengthens the diaphragm, a large muscle at the base of the lungs, through deep breathing. You will learn to use the diaphragm instead of the upper chest muscles. Diaphragmatic breathing can help you relax and breathe more easily.

Diaphragmatic breathing does not take the place of medicines or other treatments, but it can help you breathe more easily in certain situations.

How do I practice diaphragmatic breathing?

- Relax your neck and shoulder muscles.
- Get in a comfortable position by lying down or sitting.
- Put one hand on your upper chest and the other hand just above your waistline to feel the diaphragm move.
- Take a normal breath in through your nose and feel the hand on your stomach move outward. The hand on your chest should not move.
- Breathe out slowly and gently through your mouth with pursed lips, as if you were going to whistle. Let the hand on your stomach move inward as you breathe out.
- Exhale at least twice as long as you inhale. For example, count to 2 as you take air in. Then count to 4 as you breathe out.

What is focused breathing?

Focused breathing is a technique that helps you focus only on your breaths in and out. It can help when you're feeling stressed or uncomfortable. You can also practice focused breathing during meditation or while imagining a new scene (imagery).



How do I practice focused breathing?

- Sit or lie down.
- Put your hands on your stomach or chest. Notice how your hands rise and fall as you breathe in and out. (If you are lying down, you might notice that your hands rise more on your belly than on your chest.)
- Breathe in through your nose like you are smelling a flower. Notice how your breath feels in your chest and belly.
- Breathe out like you are blowing out birthday candles.
- Each time you breathe out, notice that your body relaxes a little more. Repeat the exercises for 5 to 10 minutes.

What is paced breathing?

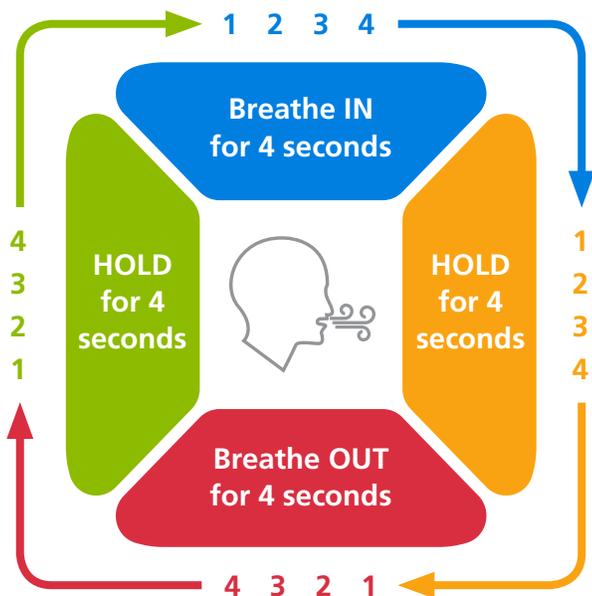
Paced breathing is a technique that helps you take slow, deep breaths using your diaphragm. It can help you relax and give you a sense of control. You can visualize paced breathing as slowly blowing bubbles, because it requires the same type of breathing.

How do I practice paced breathing?

- Sit or lie down in a comfortable, quiet space.
- Set a timer for 5 to 10 minutes.
- Close your eyes and listen to the sound of a clock, metronome, or other repetitive sound.
- Think about how you breathe in and breathe out.
- Notice the pattern your breathing has with the sound you are listening to.
- Let yourself focus on the pattern as you continue to breathe in and out.

What is square breathing?

Square breathing is a way to control your breathing through counts of 4. It can help you calm down and relieve stress. You can also use square breathing with meditation by visualizing a four-sided object, like a window or picture frame.



How do I practice square breathing?

- Sit or lie down.
- Breathe in like you're smelling a flower while counting to 4.
- Hold your breath while counting to 4.
- Breathe out like you're blowing bubbles while counting to 4.
- Pause for 4 counts.
- As you breathe, draw a square in the air with your finger.
- Repeat for 5 to 10 minutes.

How can I make breathing techniques easier?

To make breathing techniques easier:

- Practice when you aren't stressed or in a lot of pain.
- Do the exercises daily for about 5–10 minutes at a time.
- Find a quiet place where you can sit or lie down comfortably with your eyes closed.
- Practice at least one of the techniques while lying down on your bed before falling asleep.

Notes

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