

Deep Breathing for Relaxation

Deep breathing has a natural calming effect on the nervous system. Studies have shown that deep breathing techniques are extremely effective in handling depression, anxiety, stress-related disorders, chronic pain, eating disorders and obesity.

What kind of breather are you? Try this test:

Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach. Take a normal breath while looking down. If the hand on your chest rises first, you tend to breathe in your chest. If the hand on your stomach rises first, you are more of a belly breather. Shallow breathing causes a constriction of the lungs and chest, which over time decreases oxygen flow to your tissues.



Benefits of Deep Breathing

Relaxation

Deep breathing is the fastest way to trigger your body's relaxation system. It shuts down your stress hormones which, when overworked, may be related to depression, muscle tension, body aches, digestion issues, and trouble sleeping.

Detoxification

Your diaphragm is the large dome-shaped muscle at the base of your lungs. By deep breathing, you are expanding and contracting your diaphragm. This action assists your body by helping it to get rid of toxins. The consequences of improper detoxification includes weight gain, muscle loss, high blood pressure, fatigue, and inflammation.

Promotes Weight Loss

Deep breathing delivers many of the benefits of exercise. It improves the cardiovascular and respiratory systems and helps to promote weight loss. Interestingly, when you are stressed, your body tends to burn energy, rather than fat. Deep breathing encourages your body to burn fat

instead. In addition, triggering the relaxation response will result in less stress, depression and anxiety which can trigger unhealthy habits that can result in weight gain.

Breathing Technique

Find a comfortable place to sit. Sit up straight with your hands resting on your knees and relax your shoulders. There are two important things to remember before you start deep breathing. One is that your breath begins with a full exhalation (or breath out). You can't inhale fully until you empty your lungs completely. Secondly, it is important to breathe in through your nose.

A simple count for deep breathing is seven-eleven. On your next exhalation, breathe out slowly through your nose, to a quick count of 11. Tighten your stomach muscles, as you take a deep breath out. At the bottom of your breath, pause slightly, and then inhale to a count of seven. Push your stomach outward as you breathe in. Now close your eyes and repeat 5-10 times.

Do this at least twice a day. You cannot do it too often. If you feel a little light-headed when you first breathe this way, do not be concerned; it will pass. You can also try shortening the length of time for each breath. It will take a while for your body to adapt to deep breathing. Start with four breaths and slowly increase over time.

Once you develop this technique by practicing it every day, it will be a very useful tool that you will always have with you. Use it whenever anything upsetting happens – before you react. Use it whenever you are aware of internal tension. Use it to help you fall asleep. This exercise cannot be recommended too highly. Everyone can benefit from it.

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