

BREATHWORK

Guide

CALM YOUR MIND AND ELEVATE
YOUR MOOD WITH THESE 7
BREATHING TECHNIQUES



BREATHWORK BASICS

How it helps

Each day, we take about 20,000 breaths. And many of us don't give it much thought. But our breath has the power to change the way we feel... and we can learn to harness that power through breathwork.

What is Breathwork?

Breathwork is techniques that involve conscious control of your breath to improve your physical, mental, and emotional health.

How you breathe influences your nervous system. Slowing your breath and extending your exhales activates the parasympathetic nervous system, your "rest and digest" response. This helps you feel calmer and more relaxed.

Holding your breath, or breathing shallowly or rapidly, activates your sympathetic nervous system, your "fight or flight" response. This triggers the release of stress hormones and can make you feel anxious and jittery.

That's where breathwork comes in. By intentionally changing your breath, you can release stress, regulate your nervous system, and relax your body and mind.

Benefits of Breathwork:

- Eases stress
- Reduces depression & anxiety
- Improves immune function
- Boosts mood
- Sharpens memory & focus
- Promotes restful sleep
- Lowers blood pressure
- Decreases asthma symptoms
- Improves heart rate variability (HRV)
- Reduces PTSD symptoms



GETTING STARTED

With breathwork

There are loads of breathing techniques out there. So if you're new to breathwork, you might be wondering where to start. Here are some tips to help you create a breathwork practice that's right for you.

Breathwork Tips for Beginners

- **Start small.** If you're just starting breathwork, take it easy at first. Stick to beginner techniques (like the ones on the next 4 pages). Start with a few minutes and slowly work your way up.
- **Experiment.** Play around with different techniques until you find the ones you enjoy the most.
- **Practice regularly.** The more you practice breathwork, the more it retrains your nervous system. Aim to practice every day for the best results, even if it's just for 5 minutes.
- **Stick to a schedule.** Plan when you'll practice breathwork to make it a habit. First thing in the morning, right after work, or before bed are all good times to reset.
- **Set reminders.** Set an alarm on your phone or post sticky notes on your bathroom mirror or bedside table to remind you to practice.
- **Try an app.** Mindfulness apps like [Insight Timer](#), [Headspace](#), and [Calm](#) have many guided breathwork meditations.
- **Check out virtual options.** Spotify and [YouTube](#) also have tons of free guided breathwork sessions to help you get the hang of it.
- **Go slow.** Hold off advanced techniques (like the last 3 in this guide) until you've established a regular breathwork practice and feel ready.

Ready to try it out? Read on for a walkthrough of 7 popular breathwork techniques...

DIAPHRAGMATIC BREATHING

Diaphragmatic breathing, also known as belly breathing, is one of the simplest breathwork practices. It involves taking slow deep breaths to engage your diaphragm. This activates the vagus nerve, which triggers your body's relaxation response.

How To Do It

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable spot.
2. Place one hand on your belly, just below your navel and the other hand on your heart.
3. Slowly inhale through your nose, allowing your belly to soften and expand like a balloon.
4. Exhale slowly and steadily through your mouth, letting your stomach relax.
5. Repeat these steps for 5-10 minutes, up to 3 or 4 times a day.

[Click here](#) for a video demo

How It Helps

- Relieves stress and anxiety
- Promotes relaxation
- Reduces blood pressure and heart rate
- Strengthens lungs



4-7-8 BREATHING

This rhythmic breathing technique involves inhaling for 4 counts, holding your breath for 7 counts, and exhaling for 8 counts. Extending your exhales longer than inhales activates the parasympathetic nervous system, helping you feel calm and relaxed.

How To Do It

1. Sit comfortably and exhale all the air out of your lungs.
2. Inhale slowly through your nose for 4 counts.
3. Hold your breath in for 7 counts.
4. Exhale slowly through your mouth with pursed lips, making a “whooshing” sound as you breathe out.
5. Repeat the steps for up to 4 breath cycles to start.
6. Over time, you can work your way up to 8 breath cycles

[Click here for a video demo](#)

How It Helps

- Melts away stress and anxiety
- Lowers heart rate and blood pressure
- Calms the mind
- Improves sleep quality
- Enhances lung function
- Reduces frequency and severity of migraine attacks



BOX BREATHING

Box breathing, also called square breath, is a technique that involves inhaling, pausing, exhaling, and pausing for equal amounts of time. This is another great technique to calm anxiety. Navy SEALs even use it to help them navigate high-stress situations!

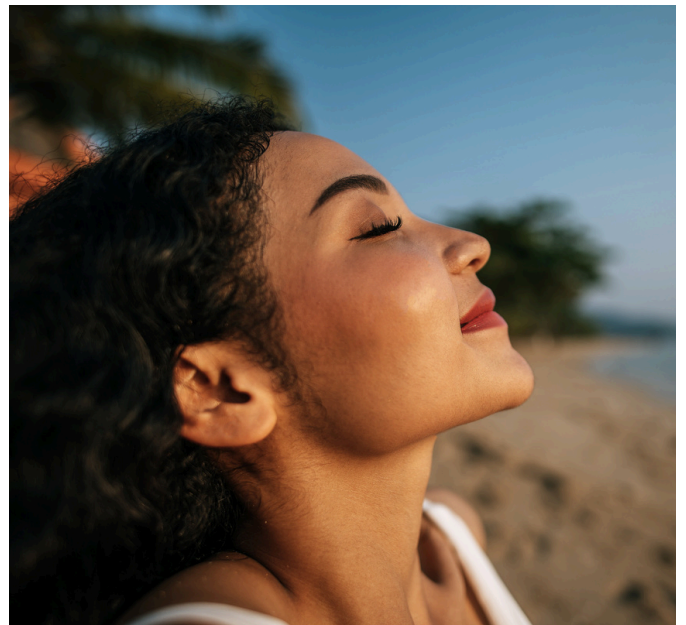
How To Do It

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
2. Inhale slowly through your nose for a count of four.
3. Hold your breath in for 4 counts.
4. Exhale slowly through your mouth for a count of four.
5. Hold your breath out for 4 counts.
6. Repeat the steps for as long as you like.

[Click here for a video demo](#)

How It Helps

- Relieves stress and anxiety
- Eases panic and worry
- Combats hyperventilation
- Improves sleep
- Promotes a sense of calm
- Helps refocus your mind
- Reduces blood pressure



ALTERNATE NOSTRIL BREATHING

This ancient yogic pranayama technique, also known as Nadi Shodana, is an excellent anxiety buster. As the name suggests, it involves breathing in and out through alternate nostrils. It's said to clear energy blockages and help balance the left and right hemispheres of the brain.

How To Do It

1. Sit up straight with your shoulders relaxed.
2. Take your right hand and plug your right nostril with your thumb.
3. Breathe in slowly through your left nostril.
4. Lift off your thumb and plug your left nostril with your ring finger.
5. Slowly exhale through your right nostril.
6. Keep your finger where it is and inhale through your right nostril.
7. Lift off your finger and plug your right nostril with your thumb again.
8. Exhale slowly through your left nostril.
9. Repeat the steps for at least 5 to 10 cycles, or up to 5 minutes.

[Click here](#) for video demo

How It Helps

- Relieves stress and anxiety
- Regulates the nervous system
- Lower blood pressure
- Promotes relaxation
- Improves oxygen flow



WIM HOFF BREATHING

Popularized by “Ice Man” Wim Hoff, this advanced breathing technique is often used by coaches and athletes to improve performance. It combines powerful breaths with prolonged breath holds. It’s often used in combination with cold therapy.

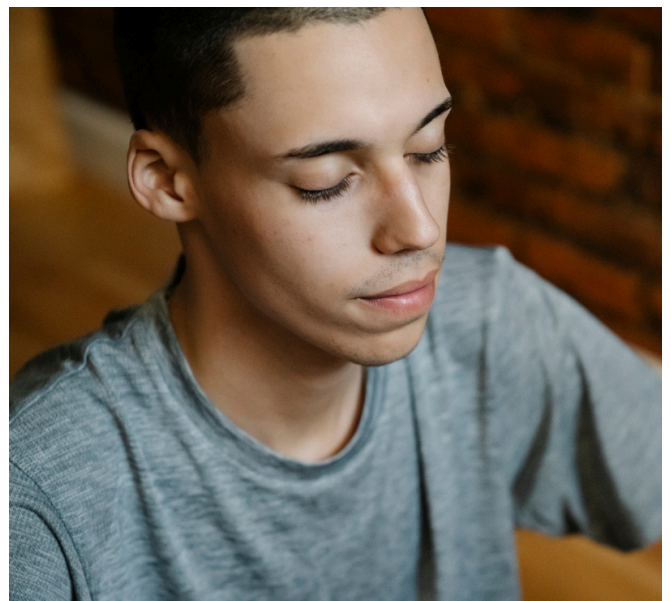
How To Do It

1. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
2. Breathe in deeply through your nose or mouth.
3. Once your lungs are full, let out a relaxed exhalation through your mouth.
4. Repeat this for 30 breaths, one right after the other.
5. After the last exhale, hold your breath out until you feel the urge to take another breath.
6. Take in a big breath, allowing your belly to fully expand. Hold your breath in for 15 seconds and then let it go.
7. Repeat the cycle up to 4 times.

[Click here for a video demo](#)

How It Helps

- Increases energy
- Enhances sleep quality
- Reduces stress
- Improves immune function
- Lowers inflammation
- Improves oxygen delivery during athletic performance



BUTEYKO BREATHING

This breathing technique was created by Ukrainian doctor Konstantin Buteyko in the 1950s. It's a more advanced technique that involves nasal breathing, breath holds, and breath control. It's often used to train people with asthma and other respiratory issues how to breathe better.

How To Do It

1. Sit upright and breathe normally through your nose for a few minutes.
2. After a relaxed exhale, hold your breath and plug your nose with your thumb and index finger. This is known as a controlled pause.
3. When you feel the urge to breathe, gently release your nose and inhale slowly.
4. Breathe normally for 10 seconds. Then repeat the steps 3 to 5 times.

NOTE: This is an advanced method. So you may want to consider working with a certified Buteyko practitioner to learn this technique. [Click here](#) to find one in your area.

Or [click here](#) for a video demo

How It Helps

- Reduces asthma symptoms
- Relieves anxiety
- Prevents hyperventilation
- Enhances sleep quality
- Improves breath awareness



HOLOTROPIC BREATHWORK

Holotropic breathing is an advanced breathwork technique created by psychiatrist Stanislav Grof and his psychotherapist wife Christina Grof. It uses rapid, controlled breathing patterns to help people achieve higher states of consciousness. It's intended to foster personal growth, healing, and self-exploration.

How To Do It

Holotropic breathing is a powerful technique that's said to help release repressed emotions. This will look different for everyone. Waves of anger, sadness, or fear may arise, or tears may flow.

Since this technique can be intense, it's best to practice it one-on-one or in a group setting with a trained Holotropic practitioner. [Click here](#) to find one in your area.

And to learn more about Holotropic breathwork [click here](#).

How It Helps

- Reduces stress
- Increases self-awareness and mental clarity
- Creates new neural pathways in your brain
- Enhances detoxification
- Promotes emotional catharsis

