

Health Matters

A Marathon Health Wellness Resource | 2025



Shifting your breathing rate and pattern helps to create a calming response.

This can help to lower blood pressure, slow heart rate, regulate emotions, control pain, and ease stress and anxiety.

Breath for health

Relaxation is a process that decreases the effects of stress on your mind and body. In general, relaxation techniques refocus your attention on something calming and increase awareness of your body. Breathing techniques calm your nervous system, creating positive changes in your mind and body.

Mind and body benefits

Breathing techniques help you concentrate on slow, deep breathing and aids you in disengaging from distracting thoughts and sensations. It can help you create a calm, steady, controlled mind, supporting an increase in clarity, focus and concentration.

How to practice

How to start. Find a comfortable, quiet place to sit or lie down. Consider closing your eyes to maintain focus.

Experiment. Find the breathing technique that works well for you by trying different techniques.

Repeat. Your body's ability to relax improves with practice.

Research has found that even a single session of deep, slow breathing can reduce blood pressure and heart rate.

When can breathing exercises be beneficial?

Like any healthy habit you are trying to create, practicing breathwork regularly can help make it easier to handle stress in difficult situations.

- Whether you have a minute, or you have twenty, taking the time for mini-relaxations each day can ease stress and anxiety.
- Aim to practice your breathing techniques several minutes a day for even greater benefits.
- Try these techniques before bed for more restful sleep.
- Practice a breathing technique the moment you start to feel stress symptoms. Use your breath to regulate your response before that stress level elevates, when it is more difficult to control.

To schedule an appointment or learn more, visit my.marathon.health



Practicing breath focus

Breath focus

Breath focus is the observation of your natural, normal respiration, as it comes in and out of your body.

- Simply observe -focus your attention on your own breathing without trying to adjust it.
- It may help to focus on the rise and fall of your chest or the sensation through your nostrils.
- You may find that your mind wanders. Just notice that this is happening and gently bring your attention back to your breath.

4-7-8 breathing

- Place the tip of your tongue behind your upper teeth.
- Exhale fully through your mouth, making a “whooshing” sound.
- Close your mouth, and inhale through your nose to a count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale through your mouth making the whoosh sound for a count of eight.

1:1 breathing

- Breathe in through your nose to a count of five.
- Breathe out through your nose to the count of five.
- Add a slight pause after each inhale and exhale if you feel comfortable.
- Work up to breaths that last up to 10 counts.

Deep belly breathing

1. Place one hand on your belly. Place the other hand on your chest.
2. Slowly breathe in through your nose. Let your belly fill with air.
3. Slowly breathe out through your nose.
4. As you breathe in, feel your belly rise. As you breathe out, feel your belly lower. The hand on your belly should move more than the hand on your chest.

Lion’s breath

1. Inhale deeply through your nose and open your eyes wide.
2. Open your mouth wide and stick out your tongue, bringing the tip down toward your chin.
3. Contract the muscles at the front of your throat as you exhale out through your mouth by making a long “ha” sound.
4. Close your mouth, and inhale through your nose to a count of four, eyes wide.
5. You may turn your gaze to look at the space between your eyebrows or the tip of your nose.

In some individuals, deep breathing may increase anxiety. If you experience this, stop the exercise and seek medical assistance as needed.

Sources:

[Relaxation Techniques: Breath Focus | Harvard Health](#), accessed 2/28/22

[Relaxation Techniques: Try These Steps to Reduce Stress | Mayo Clinic](#), accessed 2/28/22

[What to Know About 4-7-8 Breathing | Web MD](#), accessed 2/28/22

Want to learn more?

Contact your provider to discuss relaxation techniques to help you stress well.

