



Mindful Breathing Techniques to Calm the Nervous System

Breathing is not just an automatic physical function. It can provide an anchor to the present moment and regulate your nervous system. Our breath can help connect us with ourselves and bring us out of our heads and thoughts and back into a balanced state with our body, creating an improved sense of groundedness.

1) Deep Belly Breathing (Diaphragmatic Breathing):

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, allowing your diaphragm to expand and your belly to rise. Exhale slowly through your nose or mouth and feel your belly relax and lower. Focus on the sensation of your breath and the rise and fall of your hands as they rest on your chest and belly.

2) Body Scan Breathing:

Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Gently allow your eyes to close or soften your gaze and take a few slow breaths in and out, allowing your lungs to expand and release. Slowly bring your attention to your body, starting at your toes and moving upwards through your body, ending with your face and scalp. As you focus on each area of your body and each muscle group, take a deep breath in and imagine sending soothing sensations to those areas. Exhale and release any tension you feel. Gently inhale and exhale as you scan your body.

3) 4-7-8 Breathing:

Inhale slowly through your nose to a mental count of 4. Hold your breath for a count of 7. Exhale completely through your mouth to a count of 8. You can repeat this sequence several times to promote and enjoy the relaxation response.

4) Alternate Nostril Breathing

Sit comfortably and use your right thumb to close your right nostril. Inhale slowly and deeply through your left nostril. Now gently close your left nostril with your right ring finger and release your right nostril. Exhale through your right nostril. Inhale slowly and deeply through your right nostril and then close it with your right thumb. Release your left nostril and exhale through it. Repeat this cycle focusing your attention on your breath and maintaining a consistent rhythm.