

Deep Breathing *for Relaxation*

Before you begin

Get in a comfortable position. You may want to lay flat on a bed or couch with arms out slightly away from your sides. Or sit in a comfortable chair with your feet on the floor and your hands either flat in your lap or placed on the arms of the chair. Regardless of the position, make sure your legs and feet are not crossed and that your body (including your neck) is well supported. Determine your SUDS (Subjective Unit of Distress Scale): on a scale from 0 (“no stress at all”) to 10 (“the most stressed you have ever been”), what is your stress level right now?



Deep breathing induction

- Begin by closing your eyes and breathing deeply. Inhale slowly and evenly through the nose (if that feels comfortable to you. Some people have trouble breathing through their noses; if that is the case, feel free to breathe using your mouth.) Exhale slowly and evenly through the nose (if you can). Start to become aware of your breathing.
- Next place one hand on your belly, right above your belly button. This is the region where your diaphragm is. For maximal relaxation benefits, you want your diaphragm to expand (seen by your hand going up) every time you inhale. Then your hand will lower with each exhale. So inhale and feel the hand rising; exhale and feel your hand lower. Continue this progression for 15 breaths.
- Now let's go even deeper with your relaxation. After you inhale, hold your breath for a moment. Then exhale slowly. Synchronize your breaths so that your inhale and exhale are the same duration. Focus your awareness on your breath and count the timing of your breaths. Set a goal of five seconds for each inhale and five seconds for each exhale. Count up from one to five on each inhale and down from five to one on each exhale with a slight pause (one second) between your inhale and exhale. If five seconds is too long for you at first, choose the number of seconds that is most comfortable for you. Never strain yourself. Just go with what feels right to you. Do this for a total of 10-15 breaths.
- Enjoy the peacefulness and calm that your deep breathing brings. When you are ready, open your eyes feeling refreshed and revived.

When you are finished

Re-rate your SUDS. How much lower did your stress level go?