

A BREATHING PRACTICE

Recharge Your Life *With Breath*

Three simple, research-informed breathing practices

Your breath is always with you, and it is one of the simplest ways to intentionally influence how your body responds to stress.

Research suggests that intentional breathing practices can support relaxation, heart rate variability (HRV), mood, and nervous system regulation. You don't need special equipment or a lot of time.

Here are three ways to experiment with your breath. Try them and discover what works best for you.

01 Slow & Steady Breathing

Sometimes the simplest practice is simply to slow down your breath.

TRY IT

- Breathe in gently through your nose for 5 seconds.
- Breathe out gently for 5 seconds.
- Continue for 3 to 5 minutes.

This creates a breathing rate of about 6 breaths per minute, a pace that has been extensively studied for its effects on heart rate variability and autonomic nervous system regulation.

The goal isn't to take huge breaths. Keep your breathing slow, gentle, and comfortable.

02 The Physiological Sigh

Have you ever noticed yourself naturally taking a deep breath followed by a long sigh? The physiological sigh is a breathing pattern your body already knows how to do.

TRY IT

- Take a full breath in through your nose.
- Without breathing out, take a second, shorter sip of air in through your nose.
- Then slowly release the air with a long, relaxed exhale through your mouth.

Inhale · little extra inhale · loooooong exhale

Repeat for a few rounds.

WHY THE SECOND INHALE?

That second little breath helps reopen tiny air sacs in the lungs called alveoli. Combined with the long exhale, this breathing pattern can help the lungs exchange gases more efficiently and reduce physiological arousal.

Stanford researchers studied a repeated version of this technique called cyclic sighing. Participants practiced for just 5 minutes a day for one month. Cyclic sighing was associated with improved mood and reduced respiratory rate, and performed particularly well compared with the other breathing practices studied.

You can practice cyclic sighing for several minutes, or simply use a few physiological sighs when you notice tension building.

03 Humming Breath

Adding a gentle hum to your exhale combines slow breathing, a longer exhale, and vibration.

TRY IT

- Take a comfortable, slow breath in through your nose.
- As you breathe out, gently: Hummmmmmmmmmm...
- Let the hum continue naturally for the length of your exhale.
- Notice the vibration around your face, throat, and chest.
- Repeat slowly for 2 to 5 minutes.

HUMMING BREATH, CONTINUED

Humming has an interesting physiological effect: research has shown that it can dramatically increase nitric oxide within the nasal passages during the breath. Nitric oxide plays important roles in airway and vascular physiology.

Emerging research also suggests that humming breathing may positively influence HRV and relaxation.

MAKE IT YOURS

Breathwork doesn't need to become another thing on your to-do list.

Try one of these practices:

*when you wake up
between meetings
before a difficult conversation
when you feel stressed
while winding down
before sleep*

Start with one breath, one minute, or five minutes.

Pay attention to how you feel before and after.

*There isn't one perfect way to breathe.
Find the breath that helps you
Recharge Your Life.*

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