

Just Breathe



Everyone says it... 'Just breathe, you will feel better.' What do they mean? How is breathing going to help? You are upset. You breathe every day. In fact you are breathing right now and it doesn't seem to be helping...you're still stressed out.

When you focus on your breathing, it forces your stressors or anxiety to take a back seat. Mindful breathing is a totally different form of breathing. It can help you can get your thoughts back on track and ultimately feel better. Some people use mindful breathing only when they are stressed, but others find it to be a great way to relax and practice it on a regular basis.

Here are some reasons why you might want to try mindful breathing:

1. It makes way for clear thinking and increases creativity.
2. Thinking about your breathing helps to release tension. When your tension is reduced, your energy levels automatically increase.
3. It helps your body detoxify – your immune and digestive systems will thank you.
4. Working on your breathing helps to reduce anxiety. With fewer anxious thoughts, you might even be able to study and sleep better.
5. It can help improve relationships. It allows you to think before you speak, and we could all benefit from that.

So how do you do it? There are actually many techniques, so pick one that works best for you.

Basic:

- Inhale deeply through your nose
- Hold the air in for 3 counts
- Exhale through mouth pushing all the air out
- Repeat

Alternate Nostril Breathing: (Nadi Shodhana)

- Place your finger along the side of your nose closing one nostril
- Inhale
- Move your finger to the other side of your nose, closing the other nostril
- Exhale

This type of breathing is well known for helping to increase mental awareness. It may not be the best thing to do during the middle of class, but you could try it in your room while you are studying for a big test.

Short Burst Breathing:

- Inhale Long and Slow through your nose
- Gently exhale through your mouth releasing short bursts of air
- Repeat

Progressive Relaxation:

- Breathe in and tense your toes, breathe out while you relax your toes.
- Work your way up your legs, and on through your whole body tensing and relaxing all your muscles.

"Happy Place" Breathing:

Picture yourself in a happy place, a place where you enjoy being. Think about all the things that you like and engage all of your senses: the smells, the temperature, the way the air feels, the sounds that you hear. Picturing yourself breathing the air in your happy place can allow you to reset your focus and give you a break from your current situation.

So next time you feel stressed, give one of these breathing exercises a try--- see if it helps you gain the perspective you need for that moment.