

# Diaphragmatic Breathing

# Simple Diaphragmatic Breathing How To

Diaphragmatic breathing or deep breathing from the diaphragm rather than the chest, is a great way to relax and reduce anxiety.

There are many ways to practice deep, diaphragmatic breathing.

This is my favorite.

1. Find a quiet place free of distractions. Lie on the floor or recline in a chair, loosen any tight clothing and remove glasses or contacts. Rest your hands in your lap or on the arms of the chair.

2. Place one hand on your upper chest and the other hand on your stomach. Inhale, taking a deep breath from your abdomen as you count to **three**. As you inhale you should feel your stomach rise up and into your lower chest (first rib). The hand on your chest should not move.

3. After a short pause of **two** count, slowly exhale while **counting to six**.

**3 inhale - 2 pause - 6 exhale - 2 pause**

Many suggest the **4-7-8 breathing technique**, also known as “relaxing breath,” involves **breathing in for 4 seconds, holding the breath for 7 seconds, and exhaling for 8 seconds**. Find out what works for you.

4. Your stomach should fall back down as you exhale.

5. Continue this pattern of rhythmic breathing for **five to ten minutes**.

**Stop if it does not feel right or you feel dizzy. Consult your doctor before starting any wellness program.**

**FIND WHAT WORKS FOR YOU!**

Revised by C. Morin from McMaster University. Guided Relaxation CD.

# Try Practicing Diaphragmatic Breathing with 4-7-8 Breathing

A technique created by Andrew Weil M.D., founder and director of the Andrew Weil Center for Integrative Medicine at the University of Arizona, this exercise can help calm your nervous system quickly. You can do this exercise either sitting or lying down.

Here's how to practice 4-7-8 breathing, according to Dr. Weil:

- Place one hand on your belly and the other on your chest.
- Count to four as you take a deep, slow breath from your belly.
- Hold your breath for seven counts.
- Breathe out for eight counts. Try to get all the air out of your lungs by the time you count to eight.
- Repeat three to seven times or until you feel calm.
- Take a few minutes to sit and feel the sensations in your body and mind before returning to your day.
- Do this seated or lying down, do not do this driving.

# Abdominal / Diaphragmatic Breathing with Mantra

## benefits

Using a mantra with abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing can enhance its benefits by combining the physiological effects of deep breathing with the mental focus and relaxation induced by repeating a phrase or word (I simply use the color blue or the number one). Here's how incorporating a mantra can be beneficial:

- **Enhanced Focus:** Repeating a mantra while practicing abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing can help focus the mind and prevent distractions. This heightened focus can deepen the relaxation response and promote a greater sense of calmness.
- **Stress Reduction:** Mantras often have calming or positive associations, and repeating them can trigger the relaxation response. Combining a mantra with deep breathing amplifies its stress-reducing effects, making it an effective tool for managing stress and anxiety.
- **Mindfulness:** Using a mantra encourages mindfulness, the practice of being fully present and aware in the moment. By focusing on the mantra and the sensations of breathing, you cultivate mindfulness and develop greater self-awareness.
- **Positive Affirmation:** Mantras are often affirmations of positive beliefs or intentions. Repeating a mantra during abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing reinforces these positive messages, fostering a sense of self-empowerment and optimism.
- **Emotional Regulation:** Mantras can help regulate emotions by providing a calming anchor during challenging situations. When combined with deep breathing, they promote emotional stability and resilience.
- **Spiritual Connection:** For those with spiritual inclinations, using a mantra can deepen their spiritual practice and foster a sense of connection with their higher self or a higher power.

When using a mantra with abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing, choose a phrase or word that resonates with you personally. It could be a traditional mantra from a spiritual tradition, a positive affirmation, or simply a word that evokes feelings of peace and tranquility. I simply use the color blue or the number one. Repeat the mantra silently or aloud with each breath, synchronizing its rhythm with your breathing pattern.

Overall, incorporating a mantra into abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing can enhance its benefits and make the practice more enjoyable and effective for promoting relaxation, stress reduction, and overall well-being.

**Research** on the combination of mantras with abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing specifically may be limited, but there is ample evidence supporting the individual benefits of both deep breathing techniques and mantra meditation. While studies directly examining the synergistic effects of combining mantras with abdominal or diaphragmatic breathing are less common, research on related topics provides insight into the potential benefits.

Here's a summary of relevant research findings:

### **Deep Breathing Techniques:**

Numerous studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of deep breathing techniques, including abdominal and diaphragmatic breathing, in reducing stress, anxiety, and physiological markers of stress such as heart rate and blood pressure. These studies provide a strong foundation for the stress-reducing benefits of deep breathing.

### **Mantra Meditation:**

Research on mantra meditation has shown that repeating a mantra can induce a relaxation response, reduce stress, and improve emotional well-being. Studies have also found that mantra meditation can enhance focus, attention, and mindfulness.

### **Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR):**

Mindfulness-based interventions often incorporate deep breathing techniques and mantra meditation as key components. Research on mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) programs has demonstrated their efficacy in reducing stress, anxiety, depression, and improving overall quality of life.

# Practice Diaphragmatic Breathing with a Mantra

1. Sit quietly in a comfortable position.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Deeply relax all your muscles, beginning at your feet and progressing up to your face. Keep them relaxed. [Relax your tongue—and thoughts will cease.]
4. Breathe through your nose. Become aware of your breathing. As you breathe out, say the word "**one**"\* silently to yourself. For example, breathe in, and then out, and say "one"\*, in and out, and repeat "one."\* Breathe easily and naturally.
5. Continue for 10 to 20 minutes. You may open your eyes to check the time, but do not use an alarm. When you finish, sit quietly for several minutes, at first with your eyes closed and later with your eyes opened. Do not stand up for a few minutes.
6. Do not worry about whether you are successful in achieving a deep level of relaxation. Maintain a passive attitude and permit relaxation to occur at its own pace. When distracting thoughts occur, try to ignore them by not dwelling upon them and return to repeating "one."\*
7. With practice, the response should come with little effort. Practice the technique once or twice daily, but not within two hours after any meal, since the digestive processes seem to interfere with the elicitation of the Relaxation Response.

**\*Choose any soothing word preferably with no meaning or association, in order to avoid stimulation of unnecessary thoughts. I use the color blue.**

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