

Breathing Exercises

Instructions for Breathing Exercises

Below, please find instructions for the breathing exercises that were noted in the slides. Use them as needed and notice which ones feel best to you, so you can integrate them into your regular wellness routine. You may also wish to use instructional videos for guidance. Several can be found online by searching for the names of the exercises below. Enjoy!

Diaphragmatic Breath

This may be practiced seated, standing, or lying down. Take the posture that feels most comfortable and remember to wear clothing that isn't constrictive in the waist. Place your hands on your abdomen just below your navel. Notice your spine, your shoulders, and the location of your head. Make small adjustments as needed to find efficient posture.

Now, slowly, count to 3 (count out loud one...two...three...); inhale through the nose; feel the nostrils open, not pulling toward each other; and feel the belly expand into your hands first then the chest gently expands. As you exhale, breathe through the mouth and slowly count to three – one...two...three. Continue to breathe in this way at your own pace. Count with the inhale, one...two...three..., feel the belly expand, and exhale through the mouth, one...two...three and feel the navel gently draw back toward the spine as you release the breath.

CONTINUE for about 30 seconds up to several minutes. Gradually increase your time with each session.

On your next exhale, release that breath and allow the breath to return to its natural rhythm and pace.

Three-Part Diaphragmatic Breath

Consider for a moment the image of a deflated balloon. When air fills the balloon, the base fills first, then the middle, then the top. The narrower portion fills last. As you engage in this exercise, think of your breath as filling a balloon. You'll inhale filling the belly first, then the middle chest, and then the upper chest until the breath reaches the collarbone.

This exercise may also be done seated, standing, or lying down. Take the posture that feels comfortable for you. Place one hand on your abdomen, just below your navel, and the other hand on your chest, below the collarbone and over your sternum. Notice your spine, your shoulders, and the location of your head. Make small adjustments as needed to find efficient posture.

Now, slowly inhale into the belly and hold for a moment (count of one). Continue to inhale into the middle chest now (count of one) and hold for a moment. Inhaling further until the breath feels full under the collarbone (count of one) and hold. Slowly exhale, release breath from the belly first, then the middle chest, then the upper chest. As you breathe in this 3-part way, notice the sensation of the front of the body moving with each part of the inhale. This will help you focus on where to direct the inhale.

CONTINUE to breathe in this way for a few minutes.

When you are ready, release the deliberate breath and allow your breath to again return to its natural rhythm and pace.

Alternate Nostril Breathing

This exercise is best completed seated in a comfortable way with your back straight. With your right hand, make the hang ten sign by folding your index, third, and ring fingers into your palm; your thumb and pinky are left free. Bring your hand to your face, in front of your nose, and gently place your thumb to the outside of your right nostril and place your pinky to the outside of the left nostril. As you complete this exercise, be sure to allow the breath to be relaxed, deep, and full for the inhale and the exhale. Be sure to not rush taking in the breath or releasing it.

To begin, close the right nostril and gently and fully inhale through the left nostril. Then close the left nostril and exhale through the right nostril. Then inhale through the right nostril. Close the right nostril and exhale through the left nostril. Continue repeating and alternate nostrils after each inhalation.

CONTINUE for several rounds up to several minutes.

When you feel ready, release the deliberate breath and allow your breath to again return to its natural rhythm and pace and notice how you feel mentally and physically.