

Breathing Exercise Instructions

(compiled from sources listed below)

Deep Breathing:

- Sit comfortably or lie down.
- Place one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest.
- Breathe in slowly through your nose.
- Feel your stomach expand as you inhale. If you are breathing from the stomach, the hand on your chest shouldn't move.
- Focus on filling up your lower lungs with air.
- Slowly exhale, releasing all the air out through your mouth.
- Use your hand to feel your stomach fall as you exhale.
- Practice breathing four to six breaths per minute (about one full inhale and exhale per 10-15 seconds).
- Repeat this up to 10 times.

If you begin to get lightheaded, return to your normal breathing.

Box Breathing:

- Sit with your back supported in a comfortable chair and your feet on the floor.
- Close your eyes and breathe in slowly through your nose while counting to 4.
- Hold your breath while counting slowly to 4, trying not to clamp your mouth or nose shut.
- Slowly exhale for 4 seconds.
- Wait 4 seconds before inhaling, then repeat steps 1 to 3.

Ideally, a person should repeat box breathing for 4 minutes, or until calm returns. If you find the technique challenging, try counting to 3 instead of 4. Once you are used to the technique, you may choose to count to 5 or 6.

Alternate Nostril Breathing

- Sit comfortably with your spine erect and shoulders relaxed.
- Place your left hand on the left knee, palms open to the sky or in Chin Mudra (thumb and index finger gently touching at the tips).

- Place the tip of the index finger and middle finger of the right hand in between the eyebrows, the ring finger and little finger on the left nostril, and the thumb on the right nostril. We will use the ring finger and little finger to open or close the left nostril and thumb for the right nostril.
- Press your thumb down on the right nostril and breathe out gently through the left nostril.
- Now breathe in from the left nostril and then press the left nostril gently with the ring finger and little finger. Removing the right thumb from the right nostril, breathe out from the right.
- Breathe in from the right nostril and exhale from the left. You have now completed one round of Nadi Shodhan pranayama. Continue inhaling and exhaling from alternate nostrils.
- Complete 9 such rounds by alternately breathing through both the nostrils. After every exhalation, remember to breathe in from the same nostril from which you exhaled. Keep your eyes closed throughout and continue taking long, deep, smooth breaths without any force or effort.

Nadi Shodhan pranayama helps relax the mind and prepares it to enter a meditative state. So it is a good idea to do a short meditation after doing Nadi Shodhan. Some others practice this breathing technique and as part of the Padma Sadhana sequence.

Humming Bee Breathing

- Come into any position that feels comfortable for your body. You may wish to sit in a chair or on the floor. You may prefer to lie down on a couch or a bed. Just find any position where you can allow your body to relax.
- Once you're comfortable, consciously release tension in your body. Soften the muscles of your abdomen. Relax your shoulders away from your ears. Unclench the muscles in your face. Let go of any tension that you tend to hold in your body.
- Once you feel soft, either relax your gaze or close your eyes completely. Bring your awareness inside and draw your attention to your inner experience. Observe how your body feels. Watch thoughts pass through your mind. Notice your breathing patterns.
- Gradually slow the rhythm of your breath. Consciously take longer, fuller, deeper inhales and exhales. Strive to equalize the length of your inhales and your exhales.
- On your next breath, draw air in through your nose. As you exhale, keep your mouth closed and release a humming sound. Inhale deeply. Exhale, hum. Continue for a few rounds of breath.

Once you've finished, restore your natural breath and observe the effects of your practice. Feel the vibrations of your hum echo throughout your body. Allow them to reach every crevice and corner to shake away any lingering tension or stress.

SOURCES/RESOURCES

1 Relaxation Exercise: Deep Breathing, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

2 What is box breathing?, Medical News Today

3 Alternate Nostril Breathing Technique (Nadi Shodhan Pranayama), The Art of Living

4 This Simple Breath Practice is Scientifically Proven to Calm Your Mind, The Nomadic Yogi
Breathing Exercises, American Lung Association