



Deep Breathing Exercises That Help Calm the Nervous System and Manage Stress or Anxiety

1. BOX BREATHING

- Inhale slowly through your nose for 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath for 4 seconds.
- Exhale gently through your mouth for 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath again for 4 seconds.

Box breathing is named for the four equal parts of breath, like the four sides of a box or square. Gentle repetition will send a message to the brain that everything is OK. Your heart will slow its pace and you will begin to relax.

[Box Breathing Benefits and Techniques \(Cleveland Clinic\)](#)

2. LENGTHEN YOUR EXHALE WITH 5 – 3 – 7 BREATHING

- Breathe in for 5 seconds.
- Hold your breath for 3 seconds.
- Breathe out for 7 seconds.

Inhaling deeply may not always calm you down. Taking a deep breath in is linked with the sympathetic nervous system, which controls the fight-or-flight response. Exhaling is linked with the parasympathetic nervous system, which influences our body's ability to relax and calm down.

[Longer Exhalations Are an Easy Way to Engage the Vagus Nerve \(Psychology Today\)](#)

[Practice the Power of the Long Exhale \(Mindful.org\)](#)

3. ABDOMINAL BREATHING

- Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your stomach.
- Breathe in through your nose, noticing your stomach rise. Your chest should remain relatively still.
- Purse your lips and exhale through your mouth.
- Try engaging your stomach muscles to push air out at the end of the breath.

If you notice that your chest is rising but your stomach is not, you are shallow breathing. If your stomach is rising, you are deep breathing, activating full relaxation in your body.

[Breathing Exercises for Better Lung Health \(American Lung Association\)](#)

4. BREATH FOCUS

- Take a slow, deep breath through your nose. As you inhale, say in your mind, "I breathe in peace and calm."
- Exhale however you feel comfortable, sighing if you wish. As you breathe out, say in your mind, "I breathe out stress and tension."

Use a picture in your mind and a word or phrase to help you feel more relaxed. Imagine your inhale washing over you like a gentle wave. Imagine your exhale carrying negative and upsetting thoughts and energy away from you.

[7 Best Breathwork Techniques and Exercises \(Positive Psychology\)](#)

[10 Breathing Techniques for Stress Relief \(Healthline\)](#)