

The Power of Mindful Breathing (R.3)



Prioritize taking a short pause during a busy time in your day.

Take a Full Five Minutes just for Your care. **Yes, 5 minutes is all it takes.** You might want to have this page handy for reference to get you started each time. Go ahead and try it right now.

Set aside All other priorities and activities. It's okay: they will still be there when you finish. Sit somewhere comfortable, where you won't be disturbed. Do what you need to do in order to truly relax (Go to the bathroom? Shut the door? Let the dog out/in? Let someone know you're taking a short break?). Consider earplugs or a headset if it helps you to focus away from ambient sounds/noise (choose silence or else very relaxing music with no lyrics).

Aim to focus fully on nothing but the simplicity of your mindful breathing for a full 5 minutes. Turn off your phone and set it aside. Or if it helps you to relax more fully, set a vibration-only timer alarm on your cell phone, put the phone in do-not-disturb otherwise mode, and set it nearby.

Close your mouth softly (if you wish, touch your tongue tip lightly on the roof of your mouth just behind your top, front teeth, to give it somewhere to rest).

Now Breathe through your nose. Feel it come in. Feel your body expand. Feel it go out. Be patient. Relax into it. Allow your breath to deepen. Down into your belly. Let your body expand a bit more with the inflow of this life force. Don't rush or force it. Let breath flow on its own. With ease.

As you begin to relax, **take a minute to scan your body lovingly.** Relax any taut muscles. Relax your belly. Relax your anus. Sit up straight. But allow your shoulders to relax and lower.

Realize gently that You. Are. Alive. You are a blessing. In this moment, there is Nowhere to go. Nothing to do. Just Be. And breathe.

Now close your eyes. And let this natural, powerful reset change you in just a few minutes.

Mindful breathing **activates your parasympathetic nervous system** to reset and rejuvenate your brain. This one, simple choice has the power to activate all repair and healing function in the body. This is not hyperbole. Our body is constantly sensing our environment for cues and clues about the status of our world. Our breathing pattern is a powerful piece of data for the brain because we are doing it constantly. **If our breathing tends to be shallow, frequent, with a focus on inhalation and short, quick exhalation, the body knows we are stressed.** It will serve us by promoting capability to fight, flight, and hide – survival, yes, but not healing or vitality. Only when we are relaxed, safe, and at ease is our breath able to deepen, slow, and allow long steady exhalations with pauses between breaths. The body knows this truth.

There are **many effective patterns and practices** for Mindful Breathing. None are optimal. There is just the best choice for You on this particular day. You may enjoy exploring a variety of approaches and seeing which feels best to include in your library of options.

We recommend you begin by using **Box Breathing.** In this approach, you inhale to a count of 4, hold your breath for a count of 8, and then exhale slowly to a count of 8. Then notice the small still point – the pause – at the bottom of your breath before you inhale again.

Realize gently that **you may choose this freedom to refocus and reset at any time.** As often as you desire. As a daily, mindful practice. And also as needed during any stressful time.