

What are breathing techniques?

During stressful situations we rarely stop to think about what is happening within our bodies. Indeed, the pressures of the moment keep our minds occupied on almost everything but our physiological functions. Consequently those functions often become irregular, leaving us in an unhealthy state of being. When we are in this state we have fewer chances to succeed in whatever we try to accomplish.

Among the many physiological functions adversely affected by stress is our breathing. Even when stress is minimal few people retain a habit of natural, full breathing which is required for maintaining a good mental and physical state. ***Proper breathing is essential for sustaining life and cleansing inner body systems.*** By learning proper breathing techniques stressful situations may be handled better and overall mental and physical health will be improved.

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California Maritime Academy
Student Health & Wellness Center
200 Maritime Academy Drive
Vallejo, Ca 94590

Phone: 707-654-1170
Fax: 707-654-1171
E-mail: healthcenter@csum.edu



Breathing Techniques



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BREATHING: THE IMPORTANCE OF OXYGEN

Oxygen plays a vital role in the circulatory and respiratory systems. As we breathe, oxygen that is inhaled purifies our blood by removing poisonous waste products circulating throughout our blood systems. Irregular breathing will hamper this purification process and cause waste products to remain in circulation. Digestion will then become irregular, leaving tissues and organs undernourished. Improper oxygen consumption will thus ultimately lead to fatigue and heightened anxiety states. The irregular breathing elicited during stressful situations not only make them hard to cope with but also contribute to a general deterioration of health. ***By the careful control of our breathing pattern, we may not only rejuvenate our systems but counter the unhealthy effects of stress.***

BREATHING METHODS

Breathing methods are useful to settle the body and mind and induce a heightened sense of awareness. Breathing exercises have been practiced for thousands of years in the East. The West began studying the effectiveness and importance of them several years ago. By this time, sufficient research has taken place in the West to verify the usefulness of these techniques.

The following breathing methods can be helpful for reducing anger, anxiety, depression, fatigue, irritability, muscular tension and stress.

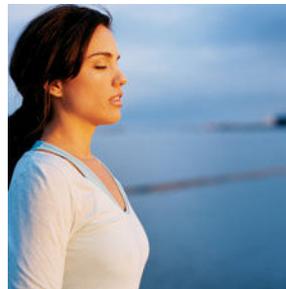
PROPER BREATHING

While breathing is a function most people take for granted, rarely is it practiced in a proper fashion. Before beginning any technique it is essential that you learn how to breath properly and fully:

Lie down on a rug or blanket on the floor with your legs straight and slightly apart, your toes pointed comfortably outwards, arms at your sides not touching your body, your palms up, and your eyes closed. This is called a "relaxed body" position. Take time to relax your body and breathe freely.

It is best to ***breathe through your nose***, as the tiny hairs and mucous membranes filter out dust and toxins from the inhaled air. Keep your mouth closed as you breathe.

As you breathe, your ***chest and abdomen should move together***. If only the chest seems to rise and fall, your breathing is shallow and you are not making good use of the lower part of your lungs. As you inhale you should feel your abdomen rising; it is as if your stomach is filling with air. As you exhale, the abdomen comes back in, like a balloon releasing all of its air. This inhale and exhale process should continue comfortably and smoothly. The chest and abdomen should rise as you inhale and fall as you exhale. The chest should move only slightly.



DEEP, RELAXED BREATHING

Although this exercise can be practiced in a variety of poses, the following is recommended for beginners:

Lie down on a blanket or rug on the floor. Bend your knees and move your feet about eight inches apart, with your toes turned outward slightly. Make sure your spine is straight.

Place one ***hand on your abdomen and one hand on your chest***.

Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose into your abdomen to push up your hand as much as feels comfortable. Your chest should move only a little and only with your abdomen.

Continue step three until it becomes rhythmic and comfortable. Now smile slightly, inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth, making a quiet, breezy sound as you gently blow out. Your mouth, tongue and jaw will be relaxed. Take long, slow, deep breaths raising and lowering your abdomen. Hear the sound and feel the texture of breathing as you become more and more relaxed.

When you first begin this technique, ***do it for five minutes***. When you become more comfortable with it, you may extend it up to 20 minutes.

Upon ending a session, stay still for a few minutes and try to keep the entire body relaxed.

The purpose of this technique is to develop a good, relaxing breathing method. It ***may be practiced anytime***, especially during stressful situations.