



Breath Work

What is breath work?

The field of breath work continues to evolve, although its roots are in eastern practices like yoga, Tai Chi, and Buddhism. Breathing exercises are effective techniques to reduce stress, regulate mood and promote deeper breathing for better health by exhaling completely. Give it a try. Start by practicing any of these techniques consciously.

Breath work techniques

■ Deep abdominal breathing

- This technique uses a long, deep breath. As you breathe, you can visualize your breath filling up your body. Your belly and chest should both expand when you inhale. When you exhale your chest relaxes and your navel pulls back in toward your spine. This type of deep breathing tells your body to relax.
- Breathe in and out through your nostrils, exhaling double your inhalation.

■ Box breathing

- Visualize a square shape and focus on it.
- Inhale deeply through your nose for a count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of 4 and exhale through your nose for a slow count of 4.
- Hold your breath again for 4 counts before taking another 4 count inhalation.

■ Alternate nostril breathing

- First, take your right hand in front of your face and with your right thumb, close your right nostril. Inhale through your left nostril for a count of 4, and then plug it shut with the right ring finger for a count of 4. Both nostrils should be plugged at the top of the breath. Hold for a count of 4. Now, open your right nostril and exhale through that side for a count of 4. Repeat the practice, now inhaling through the right nostril and plugging the left with the right ring finger, pausing at the top, and exhaling through the left nostril. Breathe softly and quietly. Inhale through left, HOLD, exhale through right, HOLD, inhale through right, HOLD, exhale through the left, HOLD, continue 10 to 15 cycles.



■ Breath of fire

- This is a more advanced technique. When you inhale, your abdominal muscles are relaxed. When you exhale, engage your core to help push the air out of your body. This breathing technique may take some practice. Once achieved, it helps to provide a sense of steadiness.
- In Kundalini Yoga, breath of fire is an instant energy booster. Breath of fire is a continuous rapid diaphragmatic breath done through the nose or mouth. Both inhalation and exhalation are equal and even. The navel is pulled inward as you exhale and released on the inhalation. Increases metabolism, clarity, excellent rejuvenating and energizing exercise.

■ 4-7-8

- The 4-7-8 breathing technique is great to use when you feel stressed or tense because it can help to calm the nervous system, clear the head of distractions and reduce stress.
 1. While sitting, breathe in through your nose for a count of 4, taking the breath into your lungs.
 2. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
 3. Release your breath through your nostrils for a count of 8.
 4. Without a break, breathe in again for a count of 4, repeating the entire technique 4-8 times in a row.
 5. Focus on counting when breathing in, holding the breath, and breathing out.

Benefits of breath work

■ Balances blood pressure	■ Increases air flow to arteries, veins and nerves
■ Increases your deep sleep	■ Slows down breathing
■ Releases stress hormones	■ Improves lung capacity
■ Reduces feelings of trauma	■ Strengthens the diaphragm
■ Lowers exposure to foreign substances	■ Lowers risk of allergies and hay fever
■ Humidifies and warms inhaled air	■ Reduces your risk of coughing

All of the suggestions above can be learned. To schedule a visit with an EAP counselor, please visit **bhoptions.eapintake.com**. You can also schedule a visit in-person or by phone by calling Behavioral Healthcare Options at **1-800-280-3782, TTY 711**.



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