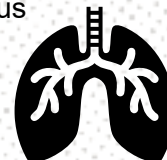


Focused Breathing Tip Sheet

“Just breathe!” is advice we may have heard as we prepared for exams and other big events. We breathe in and out all the time, without thinking. Surely it can't be as simple as just breathing. Actually, it's good advice, and it is something that we can learn to use to our advantage. Deep breathing relaxes the nervous system, and therefore it also improves mental concentration, learning capacity, and decision making. Slow, deep breathing helps you concentrate and therefore it helps you to disengage from distracting thoughts and sensations. When you find yourself drifting, bring your focus back to your breath.



Breathing exercises are easy to learn. You can try different techniques to find out which ones work best for you.



Balloon Breathing

1. In a relaxed position, either standing, sitting, or lying down, hold your hands in front of your torso and imagine you are holding a balloon. The bottom of the balloon should be the biggest part because it represents the part of the lungs that has the most potential to expand when given the space.
2. As you inhale slowly, move your hands apart to show the balloon inflating with air. While doing so, you should feel your “belly” expand.
3. As you exhale slowly through your nose or mouth, let all the air out of your balloon by bringing your hands back together. While doing so, your “belly” should deflate.
4. Repeat the steps at least three times.



Alternate Nostril Breathing

1. Stand or sit up tall.
2. Use your index finger and thumb of your right hand for this exercise.
3. Start by pressing your index finger over your left nostril. Inhale slowly through your right nostril.
4. Press your thumb over your right nostril and at the same time lift your index finger away from your left nostril. Exhale slowly through your left nostril.
5. Once you have exhaled completely, inhale slowly through your left nostril.
6. Press your index finger over your left nostril and exhale slowly through your right nostril.
7. Repeat at least three times.



Countdown to Calm

1. Stand or sit up tall.
2. Inhale slowly, and using one hand, lift one finger at a time as you count to 5.
3. Exhale slowly, and as you do so, lower one finger at a time as you count backwards from 5.
4. Repeat at least three times.



Created by Theresa M. Ferrari, PhD, Extension Specialist, for January Mental Health Month, 01/2021



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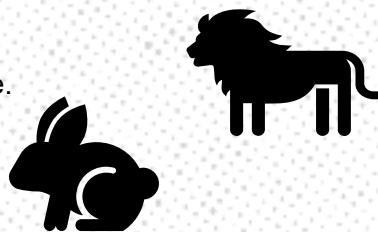
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Focused Breathing Tip Sheet

Lion's Breath

1. Start on the floor either by sitting with hands placed on your knees (i.e., Staff yoga position) or by kneeling and placing hands on the floor in front of your knees (i.e., Tabletop yoga position).
2. Imagine yourself strong and fierce like a lion.
3. Take a big, deep breath in through your nose.
4. Open your mouth and roar like a lion as you exhale.
5. Repeat at least three times.



Bunny Breath

1. Start by standing, sitting, or lying down.
2. Take a deep breath in, pushing your belly button out away from your spine so you are better able to completely fill your lungs with air.
3. Wrinkle your nose like a bunny, and exhale completely with short bursts of breath through your nose. As you exhale pull your belly button toward your spine to help push the air out of your lungs.
4. Repeat at least three more times.



Let It Go

1. This exercise can be done while standing or sitting.
2. Hold your hands in front of you with your palms facing up.
3. Imagine you are holding something you are worried about, afraid of, or angry at in the palm of your hands and then close your fists.
4. Inhale, squeezing your fists tightly, and turn your hands so that your palms face the floor.
5. Exhale and open your fists to let go of your worry, fear, or anger.
6. Repeat at least two more times, imagining the same thing or something different each time.

4-7-8 Breath

1. Sit in a comfortable posture.
2. Exhale completely through your mouth.
3. Inhale through your nose for a count of 4.
4. Hold your breath for a count of 7.
5. Exhale through your mouth, making a slight whooshing sound, for a count of 8.
6. Repeat this cycle three more times.



To access *Coping with COVID: Lesson Plans to Promote Mental, Emotional, and Social Health*, go to <https://go.osu.edu/CopingWithCOVID>.

For more information about January Mental Health Month please visit go.osu.edu/MentalHealthMonth

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