

EMBRACE EASE THROUGH MINDFUL BREATHING

Sometimes the most important thing in the whole day is the rest we take between two deep breaths.

Mindful breathing practices can help you regulate your emotions and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression. Get started with these simple steps:

- **Find a relaxed, comfortable position**

- You can be seated on a chair or on a cushion on the floor with hips elevated higher than your knees for comfort.
- Keep your back upright, but not too tight.
- Hands resting wherever they're comfortable.
- Tongue on the roof of your mouth or wherever it's comfortable.

- **Notice and relax your body**

- Try to notice the shape of your body, its weight.
- Let yourself relax and become curious about your body seated here – the sensations it

experiences, the touch, the connection with the floor or the chair.

- Relax any areas of tightness or tension.
- Just breathe.

- **Tune into your breath**

- Feel the natural flow of breath – in, out. You don't need to do anything to your breath. Not long, not short, just natural.
- Notice where you feel your breath in your body. It might be in your abdomen. It might be in your chest or throat or in your nostrils. See if you can feel the sensations of breath, one breath at a time. When one breath ends, the next breath begins.



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- **If your mind wanders, redirect**
 - Now as you do this, you might notice that your mind might start to wander. You might start thinking about other things. If this happens, it is not a problem. It's very natural. Just notice that your mind has wandered. You can say "thinking" or "wandering" in your head softly. And then gently redirect your attention right back to the breathing.
 - Stay here for a few minutes – just a short time. Notice your breath, in silence. From time to time, you'll get lost in thought, then return to your breath.
- **Relax more deeply**
 - After a few minutes, once again notice your body, your whole body, seated here.
 - Let yourself relax even more deeply and then offer yourself some appreciation for doing this practice today.

Evidence that it works

- Mindful breathing, a key practice featured in Jon Kabat-Zinn's MindfulnessBased Stress Reduction (MBSR) program, is a widely used method for cultivating mindfulness that supports the following while alleviating symptoms of depression:
 - Emotion regulation
 - Nonreactivity
 - Decentering (viewing your experiences with increased objectivity)
- MBSR, which has been adapted and studied over the last several decades, includes other practices like the body scan, mindful walking and mindful yoga. Research tells us that these practices help people to manage:
 - Chronic pain
 - Stress

- Anxiety
- Symptoms of distress.

- In fact, those who practice mindfulness for just a few weeks report a range of positive outcomes, including:
 - A decrease in burnout, stress, anxiety and depression
 - A range of physical health benefits, including better sleep quality.

Why does it matter?

- It can help us become less reactive. Mindful breathing helps us to simply notice (without judgment) our thoughts and feelings while gently redirecting our attention back to our breath. If we practice this regularly, we learn to become less reactive to mental events as well as real-life events. With time, we can then learn to respond more constructively to stressful experiences and interpersonal conflicts at work and at home.
- It can improve our relationships. Those who practice mindfulness report reduced interpersonal problems and more emotionally supportive relationships.

Mindful breathing

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