

Belly Breathing

Belly breathing, or **deep breathing**, is a simple way to help your mind and body feel calm. When we feel stressed, worried, or upset, our breathing can become fast and shallow. Belly breathing helps slow things down, so your heart rate can settle down and your muscles can relax. Slow, deep breaths send a signal to your brain to calm down, which can help you feel more in control, think more clearly, and handle big emotions more easily. With practice, belly breathing can be a powerful tool you can use anytime you want to feel calmer.

Belly breathing means taking slow, deep breaths that fill your belly with air, not just your chest. You might notice your stomach rise when you breathe in and fall when you breathe out.

How to do belly breathing:

Step 1

Get into a relaxed position, either sitting or lying down.



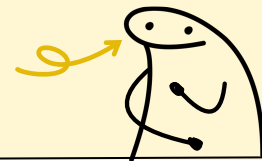
Step 2

Place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly.



Step 3

Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose. Try to make the hand on your belly rise up, while the hand on your chest stays mostly still.



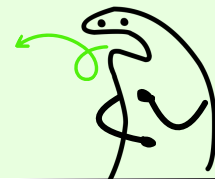
Step 4

Hold your breath for a few seconds.



Step 5

Breathe out slowly through your mouth.



Step 6

Repeat several times or until you feel your body relaxing.



Step 7

Let your breath return to normal. Notice how your body feels now.



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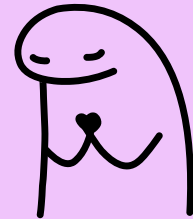
Note:



Sometimes changing your breathing pattern can cause unexpected physical sensations. If you feel lightheaded or dizzy, stop, and return to your normal breathing pattern.

Key Tip!

Because it is difficult to learn new things when we are feeling stressed, it's best to learn and practice new coping skills when you are feeling calm. Practice several times so you are prepared to use this skill when you need it. Belly breathing works best when practiced regularly, not just during times of stress.



Do You Know?

You can use belly breathing at school or in other situations without anyone noticing. Pause what you are doing and take a few belly breaths. This can be especially helpful before or during tests, or any other time you're feeling stressed or nervous.



Additional information for caregivers:

Younger Children

Adults can help younger children learn belly breathing by having the child lie on their back and placing a small stuffed toy on their belly to watch it rise and fall with each breath. Additionally, younger kids can practice belly breathing by imagining they are inflating their stomach like a balloon, then slowly releasing the air, blowing bubbles or blowing out a candle.

Adults

Coping skills like this one are helpful for adults as well. Practicing belly breathing can help adults manage their own stress, while also modeling healthy stress management for their children.

