



# BalanceWorks® Newsletter

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## Breathing for Relaxation

Although stress is a major factor in modern life, there is a strong and relatively simple way to relieve daily tension. Your body's natural state of relaxation can actually be a powerful remedy for stress. When we are relaxed tension naturally begins to melt away.

When people feel stress their body responds by producing chemicals that incite the fight or flight response. This instinct is important for emergencies, but as a response to everyday stressors, it merely serves to increase agitation and anxiety as your blood pressure and heart rate rise and your mind has trouble concentrating on anything besides the stressor.

A great way to counteract this response is to develop a relaxation technique that returns your body and mind to a naturally peaceful state. A relaxation technique can be used in the moment that the stressor occurs

to help you calm down. It is also helpful to practice relaxation on a regular basis in order to handle stressful situations more calmly and you may even be able to prevent the fight or flight response altogether when it is unnecessary.

One very effective relaxation technique is deep or diaphragmatic breathing. The majority of people actually take shallow breaths filling only their chest with air. The proper way to breathe is deeply through your abdomen. Interestingly, humans naturally breathe deeply. Next time you are just about to fall asleep notice your breathing patterns as compared how you normally breathe throughout the day. Likewise, watch a baby as they breathe. Their breaths will be deep and full starting from their bellies. Somehow over time we begin to develop shallow breathing patterns, which are actually very restrictive and do not allow us to take in the optimal amount of oxygen.

For more information or support on breathing techniques contact the work/life experts at **BalanceWorks®** by calling:

**1.800.327.2255**

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There are many benefits to making deep breathing a part of your daily routine. Many people who practice deep breathing techniques on a regular basis experience:

- Increased energy
- Enhanced mental alertness
- Improved focus and concentration
- Increased feelings of serenity and joy
- A boost in productivity and motivation
- Reduction in stress, anxiety, and tension

In addition, breathing deeply in extremely stressful situations can help to bring your body back to homeostasis by lowering your blood pressure and returning your heart rate to normal, thereby calming tension and anxiety.

On top of being effective, deep breathing is also a great relaxation technique because it can be done virtually anywhere and at any time. You do not need to devote a large chunk of time or pay for an expensive membership to practice deep breathing and maximize its benefits. Simply set aside a few minutes of alone time each day to practice breathing deeply. Breathing exercises can begin to ease anxiety when practiced for as little as 5 minutes at a time.

Try this very simple yet effective exercise to begin bringing your body and mind into a more relaxed state:

- Sit up straight or lie flat on your back
- Place your hands on stomach
- Breathe in deeply through your nose
- First fill your stomach with air
- Then keep inhaling to fill your chest
- While inhaling, your hands should rise
- Hold the breathe in very briefly
- Exhale very slowly through your mouth
- Now your hands should fall
- Toward the end of your exhalation, pull in your stomach to force out all air
- After your first deep breath close your eyes, concentrate on your breathing, and repeat for about 5 blissful minutes

With enough practice, taking full deep breaths will again become the natural way in which you breathe and you will be able to enjoy an enhanced state of relaxation. After you have mastered deep breathing you may want to try other relaxation techniques such as meditation or yoga for an even greater reduction in daily stress and tension.



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