



Breath practices, or breathwork, are techniques that involve conscious control of breathing to improve physical and mental well-being. Most spiritual traditions recommend some form of breath work as a prelude to meditation and to decrease anxiety and distraction. Practices can range from simple deep breathing exercises to more complex techniques like box breathing and 4-7-8 breathing, and can be used to reduce stress, improve focus, and enhance overall health.

Here's a breakdown of some common breath practices:

1. Body-Mind-Spirit Alignment

Purpose: Opens heart and spirit, slows breathing, and reduces oxygen demand.

How to: a) Take three deep breaths (count of three) welcoming a word/focus like GRACE

Exhale more completely (count of six) times releasing ANXIETY

b) Take three more deep breaths welcoming a sacred word like PEACE

Exhale more completely three times releasing FEAR

c) Take three final large breaths welcoming LOVE

Exhale more completely three times with the word: SURRENDER

Benefits: Useful as a simple grounding practice when anxious or prior to meditation/reflection practice.

2. Diaphragmatic Breathing (Belly Breathing):

Purpose: Strengthens the diaphragm, slows breathing, and reduces oxygen demand.

How to: Sit or lie comfortably. Place one hand on your chest and the other on your abdomen. Inhale deeply through your nose, feeling your abdomen expand, and exhale slowly through your mouth.

Benefits: Reduces breathlessness, improves relaxation, and can aid in digestion.

3. Pursed-Lip Breathing:

Purpose: Slows down breathing and makes each breath more effective, increasing oxygen intake.

How to: Inhale slowly through your nose, then exhale slowly through pursed lips, as if whistling.

Benefits: Especially helpful for those with lung conditions like COPD or asthma.

4. Box Breathing (4-4-4-4):

Purpose: Calms the nervous system and promotes relaxation.

How to: Inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds, and hold again for 4 seconds.

Benefits: Helps reduce stress and anxiety.

5. 4-7-8 Breathing:

Purpose: Regulates the nervous system and promotes relaxation.

How to: Inhale through your nose for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, and exhale through your mouth for 8 seconds.

Benefits: Can help with sleep and anxiety reduction.

6. Active Cycle of Breathing Techniques (ACBT):

Purpose: Mobilizes and clears mucus from the lungs.

How to: Involves controlled breathing exercises and coughing techniques.

Benefits: Useful for people with lung conditions.

GENERAL TIPS

Start slowly:

Begin with a few minutes of practice each day and gradually increase the duration as you become more comfortable.

- **Find a comfortable position:**

Sit or lie down in a relaxed posture.

- **Focus on your breath:**

Pay attention to the sensation of your breath entering and leaving your body.

- **Consistency is key:**

Regular practice is essential for experiencing the full benefits of breathwork.