

“I have trouble relaxing. Can mindful breathing help?”

Here are 7 steps to help you relax with mindful breathing.



1. Remove as many distractions as possible.

Turn off the T.V., move to a quiet room, soften the lighting and find a comfortable place to sit or lie down.

2. Close your eyes or find a soft gaze in the distance.

Close your mouth and relax your face and jaw. Release your tongue from the roof of your mouth; your lips may even spread apart.

3. Become aware of your breath, your natural breath, without feeling the need to alter or change it. Take a few moments to just notice how the air flows in and out of your lungs.

4. Gradually deepen your breath as you inhale and exhale through your nose. Breathe into the deepest depths of your belly, expanding up the rib cage, ending in the collar bone until you are completely filled up with air. Exhale equally as smoothly from your collar bone to your rib cage, and end in your belly until you are completely empty. Imagine your breath like a wave on the ocean—a cycle, each one new, or a vase being filled with water, then emptied. Practice making your breath as slow and smooth as possible.

5. Let your mind become focused on your breath.

A busy mind is natural; acknowledge the thoughts that enter your mind, and then imagine them rolling out to sea or blowing away with the breeze. Another way to help quiet a busy mind is to use words to express your breath. As you inhale, say to yourself, “I am breathing in.” And on the exhale say, “I am breathing out” or “relax” or “let go.”

6. Continue with your mindful breathing for a couple to several minutes. When you are done, return to your natural breath. Check in with your body and mind to notice any differences you are experiencing in this moment.

7. Your breath is always with you.

Return to this practice as often as you are able. Mindful breathing is powerful and can be done any time of the day and anywhere (in your car, at your desk, while making dinner, even before you go to or get out of bed). It only takes a few minutes to have profound and lasting effects.

