

Press pause: The power of breath

Presenter – Anjali Sharma, Wellness Consultant

Hello, my name is Anjali Sharma. And today, we're going to work on building inner strength. In our everyday lives, we're often faced with unexpected challenges and situations. And this can sometimes leave us feeling stressed, hopeless, and unproductive. When these situations arise, it's important to remember that we have something very powerful within us that helps to uncover our own inner strength. And that is the breath. Today, we will learn some simple breathing techniques to help bring focus, energy, and balance. So let's begin by settling into a comfortable seated position, allowing the eyes to lower or close.

Now, allow the eyeballs to withdraw and sit back towards the eye sockets, reducing any strain in the eyes. Relax the jaw, allowing the bottom set of teeth to separate from the top set of teeth. Mouth remains closed. Pull the shoulders back slightly, allow them to fall into a comfortable position. Rest the hands on your lap facing up. Keep the legs uncrossed, feet planted on the ground. Making these slight adjustments will naturally bring a sense of balance and strength to your practice today. Our first breathing exercise, deep abdominal breathing, where we just bring the attention to our breath. Simply observing its natural flow without changing or altering it in any way.

Now, after a few breaths actively fill the abdomen with as much air as possible. And when the belly expands to full capacity, let it empty all the way, pulling the belly button in towards the spine. And repeat, let the breath expand the belly all the way and then completely emptying it as you exhale. With the mouth still closed, continue a few belly breaths as you inhale and exhale through the nose.

After your next exhalation, this time breathe in filling the belly with air, expanding the abdomen, then continuing upward, filling the lungs with as much oxygen so the shoulders slightly lift.

Then with exhalation, empty the lungs first and completely exhale, pulling the belly button in towards the spine. Continue with this two-part abdominal breath, expanding the belly and lungs, and then emptying the lungs and belly. Expand the belly and lungs, empty the lungs and belly. With each exhalation pulling in towards your center, so all of the air exits your belly and lungs. Continue for a few more breaths. And as you empty everything out, you may notice that your mind is also emptying. Just by consciously bringing your attention to active breathing practice, we are resetting and recalibrating our minds to be still. Our minds want to move and jump around and that's just the nature of the mind.

Let's now move into a breath retention practice. We'll begin by breathing in, holding, breathing out, and holding. So to begin, let's inhale for a count of four, hold for a count of four, exhale for a count of six, and hold for a count of two. And repeat. Inhale for four, hold, exhale, hold, and repeat. This really helps to slow down your heart rate and create a greater sense of calm. Continue with this breath retention. As you inhale, hold, exhale, hold and return to your normal deep abdominal breathing for a few more breaths as we prepare to continue on with our day.

Whenever ready, slowly allow the eyelids to open and become aware again of your physical presence. Keep these breathing techniques with you and incorporate them into your daily routine whenever possible. Remember that your breath is always available to you and can be a great source of focus, energy, and balance as we uncover our own inner strength.

Thank you and stay well.

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