

Deep Breathing in 10 Easy Steps!

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1. Begin with slow, soft, steady inhalations and slow, soft, steady exhalations
2. Don't try to make anything happen – “trying” to “breathe correctly” can cause stress
3. Place your hand on your upper chest, below your collar bone. *Imagine* breathing into this space where you feel your hand. Breathe into this space for 15 seconds. Notice how the upper ribs expand to allow air in, and release to allow air out – just like an accordion!
 - a. (Note: Imagination is key! All Olympic athletes and big movie stars got to where they are today by imagining and envisioning what the experience would be like. For this breathing exercise, don't worry about whether or not you are “doing it correctly”. Simply breathe, and imagine you are breathing into your hand. Some find it helpful to imagine a balloon connected to your hand that inflates as you breathe in and deflates as you breathe out. You can even make it fun by adding color and pattern to the balloon and imagine watching it transform as the balloon/breath gets bigger!)
4. Move your hand down to the center of your chest on top of your sternum, between the breasts. *Imagine* breathing into this space where you feel your hand. Breathe into this space for 15 seconds.
 - a. You may notice how your middle ribs are now expanding a little more as you breathe in. Is the imaginary balloon getting bigger when you're breathing into this space?
5. Move your hand down and place it between your bottom ribs. *Imagine* breathing into this space where you feel your hand. Breathe into this space for 15 seconds.
 - a. You may notice how your lower ribs are now expanding more as you breathe in.
6. Keep your hand where it is. Now imagine how you fill a pitcher of water – you fill it from the bottom to the top, correct? This is how you want to imagine filling your lungs with air: from the bottom to the top in a slow 3-second breath.
 - a. 1 – breathe into the lower ribs where you feel your hand
 - b. 2- breathe into the middle ribs
 - c. 3 – breathe into the upper chest
 - d. hold
 - e. Now release for 3 – 2 – 1
 - f. Notice the pause between the inhalation and exhalation
7. Continue this 3-count breath for 15 seconds, continuing to imagine the balloon and/or pitcher as you fill your lungs completely from the bottom to the top.
8. You may notice some slight light-headedness as you practice this breathing. This is due to the increase of oxygen in your brain, nervous system, and circulatory system!
9. Notice any area of body where you still feel tension. Imagine breathing into this space and allow the breathe to melt it away – like ice into vapor.
10. Notice how good you feel and how relaxed you are. 😊

There are many different types of breathing exercises. All often hold a different purpose. The intention behind this breathing exercise is to increase oxygen in the body and allow muscle tension to release as much as possible. This is meant to be a relaxation exercise. If it becomes stressful – stop! If guided instructions are more helpful to you, try downloading my 3-minute breathing meditation available on iTunes.