



Breathing: Got Stress? How to "Breathe Easy"... by award-winning author / stress-relief expert **Susie Mantell**

We are a culture that really needs to learn how to breathe. Proper oxygenation has vast and varied implications for physical and emotional health. The word "Inspiration" actually derives from that very breathing process. When practicing mindful breathing to release stress, some recommend exhaling first to release old, stale air hanging-out deep in the lungs and make room for fresh air. Everybody's different. I prefer this sequence too, but if you don't, find a rhythm and pace that feel natural and comfortable for you. That's more important than "doing it right."

Consciously taking time to breathe deeply, and exhale completely, can help us to oxygenate fully, which can be calming. The intake of oxygen slowly and mindfully helps muscles to relax. Try inhaling soothing white light -- then exhaling any tension...worry....

1. Safety First: If you have any medical condition that might be impacted by mindful breathing, check with your physician first to determine what might be safest and most beneficial for you.
2. Belly-Breathing: Breathe slowly, rhythmically, into a soft belly, pausing briefly before each exhalation. Listen to your body regarding rhythm and depth of inhalation to avoid feeling "light-headed." Some find it helpful to repeat a soothing phrase while focusing on the out breath, (e.g. "I exhale all worry and tension," and on the in-breath, "I inhale peace and well-being." Another variation might be, "I exhale limiting beliefs... Inhaling new possibilities and hope.") Or make up your own.
3. Settle Down: Feeling tense? Stress tends to bring energy upward in the body - often around the neck, jaw and shoulders. Try refocusing awareness lower...into the solar plexus...moving down into the hips...the feet, grounding yourself.

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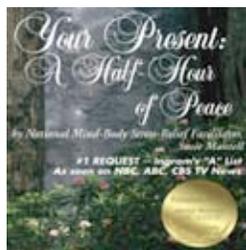


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4. Lose that Pain-in-the-Neck: Many people complain of muscle tension in the neck and shoulders. Some hold stress in the jaw, lower back or experience headaches. Imagine exhaling "through the shoulders." During mindful breathing, gently place the tip of your tongue behind your top front teeth where they meet the palate. Just softly. No pressure. Notice as you do that the muscles in your jaw, cheek and throat soften too. This is good to remember while sitting in traffic, in line at the bank, while backing up files (or reading articles like this one!).
5. There is an interesting breathing technique originating in yoga. Closing your eyes, exhale through one nostril then inhale through the other. It's a bit easier to use a finger to close off one nostril while "using" the other. Eventually you might not need to. Mindful breathing is a wonderful way to quiet head noise and promote inner peace.

Enjoy lots more tips on my website. There are many stress tips there that have general applications, and I think some may help. www.relaxintuit.com

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