



THE BREATH TECHNIQUE

Here's a technique for conscious breathing that's amazingly simple, but very effective. There are three parts:

- 1) Inhale – Draw your breath in through your nose the way you do normally, but focus on noticing how the air flows into your nose.
- 2) Exhale – Slowly and very gently blow the breath out through your mouth with your lips pursed a little, as if you're blowing bubbles. Make your exhale a bit longer than your inhale.
- 3) Pause – Allow a brief pause or rest at the end of your exhale. At first this may feel strange, but as the breathing becomes more comfortable for you, the pause will become natural and restful. Notice this is not holding your breath, but simply allowing a peaceful pause

Practice by doing three conscious breaths, making each breath a little fuller and each exhale a little longer than the one before. Don't inhale too big or you'll end up coughing!

In the beginning, you'll probably want to stretch out somewhere or sit comfortably in a chair. Let your body relax and your eyes drift shut. After three conscious breaths, stay quiet for one to five minutes. Let your breath remain slow and steady. Set a kitchen timer if you're concerned that you may fall asleep. Practice the breaths throughout the day.

This breathing technique can decrease muscular tension and pain, help you relax, decrease blood pressure, and have a positive effect on the symptoms of stress and anxiety.

Pay attention during the day to notice if you're holding your breath. Breath holding can give you the illusion of being in better control or more focused, but can actually lead to loss of focus, headaches, lightheadedness and muscular tension – especially in the neck and shoulders.

Once you're comfortable with the breath technique you can do one or more conscious breaths anywhere, anytime – eyes open or closed. Just be sure to keep your eyes open if you're driving a car!

PRACTICAL DREAMER

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