Waiting to Inhale

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Every day, all day, in and out. It’s so natural, you do it in your sleep. While breathing is an automatic act, we suggest focusing on long, regenerative breaths that connect your subconscious and conscious. Breathing exercises have long been shown to reduce anxiety and depression, muscle tension, headaches and fatigue—while also increasing energy. But most important, focused breathing gets instant results. Stimulating blood flow and oxygen can help you relax instantly. Breathing exercises are also an invigorating way to wake up in the morning. And they’re so restorative you might consider doing them at night to wind down. Breathing is one bodily function you can easily control-—and with every breath you take, you can improve your mental and physical health.

Five Steps to a Perfect Deep Breath

1. Take a seat. Make sure you’re in a comfortable position.

2. Use your hands. Put one hand right below your rib cage and the other on your chest.

3. Breathe in. Inhale through your nose, letting your belly push your hand out. Your chest should remain still.

4. Breathe out. Exhale through your lips, like you’re whistling. Use your hand to push the air out of your belly.

5. Repeat. Run through the sequence a few more times, taking it slow and focusing on each breath.

When you’ve mastered belly breathing, try the more advanced 4-7-8 routine. Using the same technique as above, breathe in while counting to 4, then hold your breath while counting to 7, then breathe out completely while counting to 8. Repeat.

For a morning pick-me-up that relieves muscle stiffness and clogged breathing passages, try this: Bend forward at the waist with knees slightly bent, letting your arms dangle close to the floor. Take a deep and slow inhale while rolling up slowly, one vertebrae at a time, letting your head come up last. Hold your breath for a few seconds then exhale slowly as you bend forward at the waist again. Repeat.

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