

Just Breathe

April 1, 2023

The way we breathe affects our overall health and ability to manage stressful times.

Breath awareness is not just for Yogi's.

It is a mind/body tool used to enhance the body's natural response to stressors.

Balancing the cardiorespiratory system has a direct positive effect on the body and the ability to recover from stress with less symptoms of fatigue.

During Stress- What happens to the body?

- Body goes into "fight or flight" mode.
- Heart rate increases.
- Blood pressure increases.
- Breath becomes shallow and quick.



The fight or flight response is normal and allows the body to survive stressful situations. However, what if the stress we encounter becomes too frequent and the body never recovers properly? We then find an opportunity to practice our stress management skills. Breathing techniques can be our first line of defense when faced with stress.

Our body has a system (parasympathetic nervous system), that is responsible for restoring the body and its systems after an episode of fight or flight. If we tend to overwork these systems, our response becomes compromised, and our ability to fight through stress is subpar.



"I encourage everyone to notice what your breath feels like when you are dealing with a stressful situation. Do you find yourself holding your breath or tensing your face muscles? We practice controlling our breath so that when we encounter stress, (with gratitude of course), our body responds naturally and quickly".

Breathing techniques to try.

1. Deep Breathing or Belly Breathing

Sit upright or lie down in a comfortable position. Place one or both hands on the belly. Breathe in through the nose 4 counts, hold 1 count and slowly exhale through the mouth. In your mind follow the breath from start to finish.

Benefits: Decreases heart rate and blood pressure, improves focus and promotes calmness.

2. Ujjayi Breathing or Yoga Breath

Sit upright in a comfortable position. Keeping your lips gently closed, inhale through the nose for 4 counts and slowly exhale through the nose for 4 counts as if you were fogging up a mirror. The breath creates a soft snoring or "ocean" sound when done correctly.

Benefits: Builds heat in the body, balances the cardiorespiratory system, keeps the mind calm and present, and has a meditative quality.

3. Bhramari Breathing "Bumblebee breath"

Sit upright placing index fingers inside the ear between the cartilage and the cheek. Inhale through the nose and slowly exhale through the nose making a high pitched buzzing (like a bee) sound.

Benefits: Releases cerebral tension (headaches), soothes nerves, improves throat health, reduces anxiety and stress, dissipates anger, lowers blood pressure, stimulates pineal and pituitary glands and supports proper function

Tip: Find a quiet place to practice (free from distractions). Practice 5-10 minutes daily for improved stress management.

Please reach out to your Novant Corporate health provider for more ideas and help with managing stress.