

DEEP BREATHING

Deep Breathing (Or Diaphragmatic Breathing) Facts

Fact #1: Brain Growth

Controlled breathing during meditation can increase the size of your brain by increasing cortical thickness.

Fact #2: Heart Health

Deep breathing practices can improve heart rate variability (the interval of time between heartbeats) in healthy individuals.

Fact #3: Lower Stress Levels

Shallow breathing may mean your "fight-or-flight" system is activated. Focusing on breathing can induce the relaxation response and create a sense of calm.

Fact #4: Mood Management

Focusing on breathing can alleviate symptoms of anxiety, depression, and other negative emotions.

Fact #5: Reduce Test Anxiety

Studies have shown that students who practiced deep breathing meditation before an exam perceived less anxiety, self-doubt, and concentration difficulties versus those who did not.



image via [livestrong.com](https://www.livestrong.com)

**TUNE IN.
TAKE A STEP
BACK.
PAY
ATTENTION.**

**YOU'RE A FEW
BREATHS AWAY
FROM LESS STRESS**

Finding Your Technique

- Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down.
- Place one hand on your chest and one just below your belly button.
- Start by observing your breath. Take a few normal breaths followed by a slow, deep breath. The air coming through your nose should move downward into your lower belly. Let your abdomen expand fully. Now breathe out through your nose or mouth.
- Feel your hand rise each time you inhale and fall about an inch each time you exhale. Your chest will rise slightly, too, in concert with your abdomen.
- Alternate normal and deep breaths several times. Pay attention to how you feel when you inhale and exhale normally and when you breathe deeply.
- Remember to relax your belly so that it expands fully.

Try for 5-6 deep breaths at a time.

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When should I practice deep breathing?

Most people think that allowing a specific time or day or week for "stress management" is optimal. However, delaying your stress reduction means maintained stress and negative consequences for your mind-body health. Deep breathing can help you manage stress in the moment and throughout the day. Try practicing:

- When you wake up or before bed
- Waiting for a class to start
- Before or after meal times
- When you need a quick energy boost
- Before a presentation, exam, or performance situation
- Walking to class, work, or student group meeting
- Before or after a stressful interaction
- During meditation
- Watching TV, YouTube, or while at a screen (or try it without a screen!)
- ... Any time!

Campus Resources

Habif Health and Wellness Center

Medical Services: 314-935-6666

Mental Health Services: 314-935-6695

Health Promotion Services: 314-935-7139

Visiting Us

Habif is on the lower level of Dardick House on the South 40 on Shepley Drive. The Zenker Wellness Suite is in the Sumers Recreation Center (room 303).

habif.wustl.edu



Habif Health and
Wellness Center

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