



The Effectiveness of Simple Breathing Techniques

By Genevie L. Kocourek, M.D.

How often do you find yourself in a stressful situation and suddenly feel that you cannot get a deep breath? Your breathing becomes shallow as you brace for the situation at hand. But, the longer you continue to breathe shallowly, the more anxious you will become—it's simply physiology and physics at work.

Recently, I had the opportunity to undergo a routine screening procedure and was reminded how effective breathing techniques can be for calming ourselves. While I waited in the staging room in my hospital gown, I found myself becoming anxious. A nurse came in to check my blood pressure. It was considerably higher than it has ever been before (157/102). I was shocked at how high it was just from the stress of waiting. I told the nurse, "My blood pressure is never that high! Please come back in a few minutes and check it again." During her absence, I employed Option 1 below for 12 cycles. When she came to recheck my blood pressure, I was much calmer and my reading was 110/72, an amazing response to my breathe work.

It is incredible what the power of breathing can do for us, and in such a small amount of time. I encourage each of you to find a breathing technique that you like and use it often. If you have high blood pressure (hypertension) or anxiety, these techniques can be very helpful when done as a daily practice and whenever you find yourself in a stressful situation.

Option 1 – A yoga breathing technique

Tuck your index and middle fingers between your thumb and ring finger.

Concentrate only on your breathing while you follow these steps:

- With your ring finger, hold your left nostril closed, breathe in with right nostril.
- With your thumb, hold your right nostril closed. Release your ring finger and breathe out your left nostril.
- With your right nostril still closed, breathe in your left nostril.
- With your ring finger, hold the left nostril closed. Release your thumb and breathe out your right nostril.
- Repeat for 5-10 cycles.

Option 2 – Yogic pranic breathing

Gently place your tongue on the roof of your mouth. This helps circulate energy throughout the body.

- Inhale through your nose for six counts.
- Hold your breath for three counts.
- Exhale through your nose for six counts.
- Hold your breath for three counts.
- This 6-3-6-3 breathing completes one cycle.

From: <http://www.mindbodygreen.com>

Option 3 – Hold and release technique:

- Breathe in and out several times without trying to control your breath.
- While doing this, say to yourself: "I breathe in, I breathe out."
- Then repeat the following two steps 4 times.
- Breathe in deeply through your nose to a count of 7.
- Picture yourself breathing in love, compassion, clarity, and calmness.
- Breathe out through your mouth to a count of 7.
- Picture yourself breathing out your fear, anxiety, and stress.

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