

# Breathing Meditation

*Self-Guided Learning*

*powered by*  
**ActivLife™**



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# Breathing Meditation to Calm Your Mind

Life can be very stressful. That can lead to anxiety and if severe enough, health issues, feelings of frustration, and even depression. Plus, a mind filled with worrisome thoughts can sap creativity, decrease our ability to effectively solve problems, and detract from our ability to appreciate the blessings in our life. The good news is, there is very extensive research that shows that meditation can help reduce stress.

First of all, what is meditation? There are different forms and they all have one thing in common: directing one's attention

to something other than the flood of thoughts that typically occupy our minds. During meditation, the goal is to gently keep attention on the 'target' for the duration of the session. This is easier said than done. With Breathing Meditation, the focus is simply kept on your breathing, in and out, for several minutes.

Meditation is not associated with any religion or spiritual belief and fits nicely into anyone's personal belief system.

**A peaceful mind can make life more enjoyable.**

**Meditation  
*quiets the mind  
and rejuvenates  
the body.***



# Let's get started!

Meditation is very safe. Rarely, some people who meditate do not feel more relaxed and instead experience a sense of nervousness or anxiousness. If that happens to you, stop the exercise and talk with your doctor.

## What's needed

You only need comfortable clothing and your favorite chair. A watch or clock helps you keep track of time.

## A few pointers

Before starting, turn off your cell phone, television, and/or music. It can help to dim the lights as well. How long you meditate is up to you. When first starting, 5 to 10 minutes of actual meditation time is a good goal. If your abilities improve with repeated practice, you can increase it to 20 to 30 minutes.

Being good at meditation and quieting the mind can be challenging. If you find

your mind racing and have a hard time relaxing and letting go, it does not matter. Do not judge yourself or get frustrated. The quality of meditation improves with practice. If you struggle, you will still derive benefit.

Frequently, your attention will be on your breathing and before you know it, you'll be thinking of something else. This is completely normal. Here are some important things about thoughts:

- As your thoughts come and go while you meditate, do not latch onto them, do not resist them, do not judge them, or get frustrated by them. As an analogy, imagine you are sitting in a cave behind a waterfall. The water represents your thoughts. You see the water (thoughts) fall and it just keeps on coming down; simply observe it and let it float away.
- For a more persistent thought, it can help to formally acknowledge it. For example, let's say the thought is about something you've been worrying about. Slowly and silently say "worry...worry" and then return your attention back to your breathing.

While meditating you will notice distractions such as sounds, noises, feelings, and sensations. As with thoughts, just let them go and return your attention back to your breathing. As with the recommendation above about persistent thoughts, the same concept works with feelings. For example, if you are distracted by pain somewhere in your body, silently and slowly say, “pain...pain” and then return your attention back to your breathing.

You might fall asleep. No problem! If so, it's a sign that you relaxed and that you needed the rest.

## Now it's your turn!

- Sit comfortably with your feet flat on the floor. Close your eyes. Place your hands gently over your stomach, one hand over the other. Relax your shoulders and arms. Breathe through your nose if you can. Take a slow, deep breath in, leading with your stomach. Feel your hands rise and your stomach expand. Then slowly exhale and feel your hands sink as

your stomach goes back in. Do this for several breaths. After a couple of minutes, begin to slow your breathing and make it a bit more shallow.

- Place your attention on the air as it enters your nose or mouth, and when leaving your body. Feel how it is slightly cool as it enters and slightly warm when it leaves. Do that for a few cycles of breathing.
- Without realizing it, your mind will shift to different thoughts. That is okay. Gently let the thoughts go and return your attention to your breathing. Feel your hands rise and fall as you breathe in and out, in and out. Continue with this for the full time you set aside to meditate.
- Once you reach the end of your meditation, slowly expand your attention beyond your breathing and sense how your body feels. When you're ready, open your eyes. Stretch a little. Slowly move your head on your neck, move your shoulders, spread your arms, smile.

Thank you for working on being well!

### How often?

Once per day is recommended but you can meditate as often as you like.

## Keep up the good work!

Research shows that regularly performed meditation can increase one's awareness of the present moment. Those who practice regularly experience a sense of calm, peace, and relaxation. Meditation reduces stress and can generate many health benefits such as lowered blood pressure and fewer aches and pains. Research also shows that those who meditate regularly experience an increased sense of compassion, greater creativity, better memory and problem-solving abilities.



The mind is like water.  
When it's turbulent,  
it's difficult to see.  
When it is calm,  
everything becomes clear.

—unknown

### The ActivLife Program

provides many opportunities to improve your health. Check with your ActivLife Coordinator to find out when classes and groups are offered or continue with more self-guided learning like:

- Strength!
- StretchAbility
- Build Better Balance 101
- Memory 101: Imagery for Lists
- Attention 101: Five Simple Ways to Improve Your Attention

**Keep investing in your wellness!**

# My Progress in Breathing Meditation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

For the week of: \_\_\_\_\_

## How Often?

Use your Breathing Meditation Self-Guided Learning for instructions. Meditation is safe to do as often as you like. Meditation reduces stress and can generate many health benefits such as lowered blood pressure and fewer aches and pains. Research also shows that those who meditate regularly experience an increased sense of compassion, greater creativity, better memory and problem-solving abilities.

As you begin your practice, record below the days during the week that you meditate. Mark each with an X.

MEDITATION	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	NOTES
Week One								
Week Two								
Week Three								
Week Four								