



"Breathe Easy" to Soothe Anxiety, Depression & Pain by award-winning author / stress-relief expert Susie Mantell

We are a culture that really needs to learn how to breathe! Proper oxygenation has profound implications for both physical and emotional wellbeing. In fact, the word "Inspiration" actually derives from the breathing process.

Some practitioners recommend always beginning slow, mindful breathing by exhaling first to expel old, stale air deep in the lungs to make room to bring in clean fresh air. Personally, I prefer this sequence too but if you don't, find a rhythm and pace for mindful breathing that are comfortable for you. That's more important than "doing it right."

6 Tips for Mindful Breathing

- Find a gentle, comfortable breathing pattern. Breathe slowly and rhythmically into a soft belly, pausing briefly before each exhalation. Everyone's different, so listen to your body to confirm comfortable rhythm and depth of inhalation to avoid feeling "light-headed."
- Mindful breathing is a wonderful way to clear out "head noise" and to promote clarity and memory. Some find it helpful to repeat a soothing phrase while focusing on the out-breath. (e.g. "I exhale worry...All is well.") On the in-breath, imagine something you'd like to inhale. (e.g. "I inhale peace and well-being.") Another variation might be, "I exhale any limiting beliefs... Inhaling new possibilities and hope." You can make up your own phrases, for example, "I release pain and worry, inhaling deep comfort and calm." You might enjoy writings on mindful breathing by Thich Nat Han, Andrew Weil, M.D., and Jon Kabat-Zin, among others.
- Many complain of muscle tension in the neck and shoulders, or hold stress in the jaw, low back or experience headaches. Imagine exhaling pain and tension "through the shoulders" in wisps of grey smoke. To release pain, imagine a glowing ball of colored light soothing the area of pain. Repeatedly breathe its glow into your discomfort, exhaling the pain. Experiment with your choice of colors. They may change or swirl. If none comes to mind, use clear white light.

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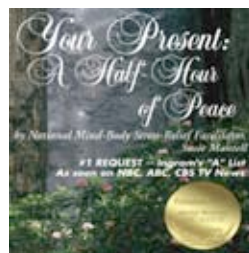
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Anxiety, Depression, Pain: How to "Breathe Easy"...
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- Since stress tends to bring energy upward in the body, often around the neck, jaw and shoulders, try re-focusing attention and awareness lower...into the solar plexus...down into the hips...the feet, grounding yourself firmly.
- There is a great breathing technique originating in Yoga practice. Close your eyes and exhale through one nostril, then inhale through the other. It's easier if you use a finger to close off one nostril while "using" the other. Eventually you might not need to.
- Bonus Tip: During any mindful breathing, gently place the tip of your tongue behind your top front teeth where they meet the palate. Just softly placed--not pressing. Notice as you do, how the muscles in the jaw, cheek and throat soften. This is good to remember while sitting in traffic or in line at the bank, while backing up files or surfing the web.

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