

Resource 16.1. Breathing to Destress

There are many online demonstrations of relaxation breathing. Andrew Weil provides an excellent website (www.drweil.com) that describes three different types of breathing--one for relaxation, one for energizing, and one for stress and anxiety. Dr. Weil also demonstrates these techniques in helpful videos on the website. And they *do work*.

1. Relax and breathe deeply through the nose (*not* the mouth) right down to expand your belly (diaphragm).
2. There should not be any noise, pauses, or breaks in the flow of your breath.
3. When you have managed this, start making your inhale breath and exhale breath equal in duration.
4. You may notice a gradual sense of relaxation spreading through yourself.

Autonomic Nervous System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supports the functioning of the heart, lungs, circulatory system, and glandular system• Has two parts--the <i>sympathetic</i> nervous system and the <i>parasympathetic</i> nervous system--dealing with our bodies' responses to activity (sympathetic) and relaxation (parasympathetic)
Sympathetic nervous system	Relates to our body's activity response by increasing our heart rate, blood pressure, muscle tone (tension) in the large skeletal muscles, sweat secretion, pupil dilation, and other functions, as well as supplying what we need for physical exertion

Parasympathetic nervous system	Relates to our relaxation response by decreasing our heart rate, blood pressure, and skeletal muscle tone, giving us what we need to disengage and rest, sleep, or digest
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- Our mental activities can prompt our sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems just as our physical activities can.
- By controlling the rate at which we inhale and exhale, we can balance our sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.

Using 2:1 Breathing to Center Yourself

A yoga technique of 2-to-1 breathing allows us to prompt whichever system we need at the time: sympathetic for action and stimulation or parasympathetic for relaxation and calming.

1. Find a quiet place. If you are shopping, and your cart has items in it chosen in the spur of the moment and not on your list, try a cubicle in the restroom.
2. Focus on a spot in front of you at eye level.
3. Roll your shoulders in circles backward and forward a few times to release tension.
4. Take a few deep belly breaths.
5. Now inhale for three counts opening up the shoulders and letting your chest rise fully.
6. Now exhale for six counts by engaging and compressing the abdominal muscles smoothly as you exhale.
7. You can increase the inhale to four counts and exhale for eight counts to deepen the calming effect.

8. Do this until the adrenaline from the “impulse rush” dissipates and you feel calm and centered.
9. Try this breathing technique when you need energy for activity, such as for sorting and decluttering.