



Finding Balance Through Breath & Relaxation

Deep Breathing

The practice of deep abdominal breathing on a regular basis can help you feel more relaxed, at ease and in balance. Deep breathing increases oxygen flow to the body and brain, decreases negative thinking, improves concentration, and improves the excretion of bodily toxins. Below is an easy and useful deep breathing exercise.

- *The Five-Second Breath*

- 1) Take a slow deep breath that fills about five seconds of time for each breath (about 2½ seconds inhale, 2½ seconds exhale).
- 2) You can use the second hand on a clock or watch to time your breath. Use of the second hand can help direct your attention to the deep breath and your experience of relaxation.
- 3) Your chest, torso, and stomach will expand on the inhale and contract on the exhale. As you expand on the inhale, your lungs fill deeply.
- 4) Breathe through your mouth or nose, whichever feels most comfortable.
- 5) Try taking one minute worth of the five-second breaths. You can do this 3-5 times per day for maximum effect.

DEEP RELAXATION EXERCISE

Deep relaxation is more than relaxing in front of the TV or curling up with a good book. Deep relaxation is a distinct physiological experience of slowing down your body, mind and emotions to a comfortable, relaxed and balanced state. Below is a step-by-step approach to doing a deep relaxation exercise. You can do it for up to 20 minutes one or more times daily.

- 1) Find a comfortable and quiet place to sit or lie down. Allow your body and mind to shift into relaxation without falling asleep.
- 2) Take 10 slow, deep, cleansing breaths. As you do this, your breathing can settle into its own comfortable pace and depth.
- 3) Your experience of relaxation can deepen as you notice any of the following:
 - You can notice the sounds around you and within you.
 - You can notice the physical sensations in your body, like your breath going in and out.
 - You can notice any thoughts that float in and out of your mind, like fluffy white clouds on a sunny, breezy, blue-sky day.
 - You can notice any images in your mind that can deepen your experience of relaxation and increase your sense of comfort and security. You can notice images of pleasant places in nature, favorite relaxing activities you enjoy doing or whatever images you find pleasing and relaxing.
 - You can return to the present moment refreshed and alert.