

Diaphragm Breathing with Full Exhalation

There are two physiological aspects to deep breathing that can switch you out of fight or flight. The first is breathing deeply enough to engage the diaphragm. The second is slow, steady and complete exhalations, you slowly and fully release all of the air you took in on the in-breath. Make your exhalation longer than your inhalation. This breathing technique combines the two.

1. It is recommended to breathe in and out through your nostrils when doing this breathing if you can.
2. Slowly take in a very full, very deep breath. You want to breathe into the area below your belly button, and start your exhale from the area below your belly button. Here are a few different ways to help you understand this breathing:
 - a. Inhale much more deeply than you are used to. Imagine you are pushing the air all the way down into your hips.
 - b. Place your hands flat on your belly below your belly button. Breathe deeply enough to lift your hands.
 - c. Imagine your whole torso is a pitcher, and you are filling it up with air. The pitcher expands as you fill it up.
 - d. These deep breaths may be choppy at first, but they will smooth out as practice this more.
3. Do this full belly breathing until you are comfortable with it and you are really filling up with air.
4. Now add long, slow, full exhalations after the deep in-breaths. Exhale slowly, smoothly and completely. Continue your smooth exhalation until you have released all of the air you inhaled. You can even squeeze your lower stomach muscles a little at the end to push out the last bit of air.
5. Make your exhalation longer than your inhalation. You can count at first to help with this. If you inhale for a count of 4, exhale for a count of 8, for example.
6. Imagine these deep waves of breath rolling through your body like waves through the ocean.

If you are feeling stressed or triggered, just a few minutes of this type of breathing will drop your stress level significantly. Keep doing this breathing until you feel better.

If you practice this breathing routinely, it can help lower your baseline stress level.

If you can practice this breathing for 7 minutes per day, this can help clear and release held negative emotions, even old stuff.

Heart Breathing

Heart Breathing Technique 1:

This synchronizes your nervous system. It creates synchronicity between your heart and brain, and the major systems of the body. It releases chemicals in the body that help you feel good, the same endorphins that give the runner's high.

- **Step 1:** Put your focus on the center of your chest next to your heart, called your heart center.
- **Step 2:** Breathe naturally, a little deeper than normal, and very smoothly. Imagine your breath is flowing in and out through this heart center.
- **Step 3:** Continue your heart-focused breathing. Now feel a positive heart-related emotion. Think about appreciation for something good in your life, or your love or care for a person, or a pet, or a place, just think of anything that makes you feel a positive emotion in your heart, such as love or gratitude. OR, instead of thinking of something that makes your heart feel good, imagine with every inhale that you are drawing in a feeling of ease and self-love from your heart, you can say to yourself "my heart is sending me good vibes".
- **Step 4:** Continue the heart-centered breathing while you are feeling the positive heart-related emotion, and continue for several minutes.

Heart Breathing Technique 2:

This method reduces stress and improves the coherence of the heart rate signals. This technique is helpful for managing difficult emotions that can arise out of stress. For this technique, if you can practice this 10 minutes a day, you will notice a big change in how you feel in stressful situations, even a few minutes a day will make a change. Try using this technique alone at first, and then practice using it while in the middle of conflict with another person.

- Breathe in for the count of 4
- Breathe out for the count of 4
- Your in-breaths and out-breaths should be even
- Breathe smoothly
- Breathe rhythmically
- While you are breathing, focus your attention on your heart. Imagine you are breathing in and out through your heart.

Heart Focus Throughout the Day:

Another good practice to try. Throughout the day, especially when interacting with others, just focus your attention on your physical heart or your heart center, feel whichever works best for you. Just drop some of your attention into noticing your heart. You will find that this changes the energy of how you feel into something more positive, it actually changes which chemicals are produced in your body. This is especially helpful if you are having a challenging interaction. Your heart creates a different type of energy than the mind. By switching your attention from mind focus to heart focus, you will feel differently and likely much better. The energy of the encounter will also change for the better too.

Breath Awareness Meditation

This meditation has many benefits. It can help drop your stress level immediately; you will feel less stressed right after meditating. Practicing this meditation regularly will lower your baseline stress level. Meditating regularly will also decrease your stress reaction to stressful events or triggers; it helps you get in touch with the calm “witness” part of the brain, and allows this part of the brain to be in the forefront when stressful things are happening. It can also help detach the stress response from negative memories that you hold. Meditation based on focusing on sensations in the body, and practicing noticing them but not reacting to them, is how this detachment of the stress response occurs.

- Breathe naturally, don't try and change anything about how you are breathing.
- Close your eyes.
- Focus on your breathing by feeling the movement of the air through your nostrils. Feel the air coming all the way in through your nostrils, then feel the air coming all the way out through your nostrils. Feel all the sensations inside your nostrils caused by the moving air. (After you become comfortable with this, you can progress to following your breath by noticing the subtle feeling of the movement of air on the area below your nose and above your upper lip.)
- Just breathe naturally and focus your attention on your breathing as described above.
- Keep breathing naturally, and keep your attention on your breathing.
- Is it inevitable that you will get distracted and will start thinking about other things, this happens very quickly. Just notice these thoughts passing by like you are watching a movie, and try not to engage with or react to these thoughts or worry that you are having them. As soon as you realize you are distracted, gently let the thoughts pass by, and bring your attention back to noticing your breath. You can imagine the thoughts are clouds, and they move past just like clouds in the sky. Or the thoughts are like fall leaves floating on a river, they just float by and away.
- You may also get distracted by a noise in the room, an ache or pain in your body, almost anything. Again, just notice the distraction without reacting to it or worrying that you are distracted, and gently bring your attention back to your breath.
- Keep repeating the process. 1) Notice your breath. 2) Lose focus on your breath / become distracted. 3) Gently bring your attention back to your breath.

An Addition/Variation:

- After meditating for 3 to 5 minutes (or any length of time), you will most likely notice a new positive feeling has come up in you. You may feel calm or happy for example. Continue gently noticing your breath, and at the same time put your full attention on the new positive feeling that has come up. Keep paying attention to this feeling, and notice and follow it as it expands and changes.

Many people think they are unable to meditate because they cannot clear their mind. This is not true, virtually no one can clear their mind, instead everyone typically has a lot of thoughts passing through and bouncing around. Meditation is about concentrating on a point of focus, then noticing you have lost focus, and gently bringing your focus back, over and over. Bringing the focus back to your breathing allows you to release and not get caught up in your thoughts. This is how the benefits of meditation happen.

Breath Awareness Meditation, continued

You can set a timer for a certain number of minutes to meditate. Doing this meditation even for 5 minutes a day will have a big positive impact, and doing it for longer periods of time, will increase the benefits even more. You can keep building on your meditation time until you are meditating for 30 or even 60 minutes if you want to. Keep in mind that meditating frequently will have more benefit than meditating for a long period of time every once in a while.

Mindfulness

Mindfulness is focusing all of your attention on one thing, using one or more of your senses, and noticing how it changes moment to moment. For example, think about watching a campfire, and how the flames keep changing and changing.

Practicing mindfulness for even a few moments will shift your brain and nervous system into a calmer, more focused state. It will bring you into the present moment, away from fretting over past events or worrying about future events. Practicing mindfulness regularly will greatly reduce your overall stress level. It will also help create a space for you between when a stressful event occurs, and your reaction to it. This space allows you time and space to settle and think, and to respond in a way that you choose, versus an automatic unthinking reaction in the heat of the moment.

Mindfulness Exercises:

The key to all of these is to keep your attention on what you are sensing, and notice the changes that happen moment to moment. If your attention drifts away, which is normal, just bring your attention back to what you are noticing. Even a minute of mindfulness will be beneficial, you can stay in the mindfulness for 5 or 7 or 10 minutes if you wish.

- Feel where your body is being supported as you stand, sit, or lie down. Pick one spot on your body: your feet on the ground, your seat on a chair, your back laying on the couch. Notice the feeling of pressure where your body is making contact. Are there areas where the pressure is more intense? Does the feeling of the pressure change over time as you pay attention to it? What is the texture of the surface where your body is making contact, is it soft or hard? Are there spots that feel softer?
- When drinking from a bottle (or glass) of water, pay attention to the weight of the bottle as you pick it up. Feel where your hand is wrapped around the bottle. Is it cold? How does the cold feel in your hand? Notice the feeling as the bottle touches your lips? What is the pressure and texture? When the water enters your mouth, how does it feel in your mouth? What is the temperature? Does the temperature change? How does the water feel as it passes down your throat?
- Notice the feeling of air on your skin. What is the temperature? Can you feel the air's movement pass over your skin? Is this sensation strong or subtle?
- Close your eyes and pay attention to the sounds coming to you. You may hear one sound at first, and then other sounds may come in. Does the sound change over time? Rise and fall? What direction is the sound coming from? Notice the silent space the sound is traveling through.
- When you are washing dishes, sense the temperature of the water on your hands as you run water into the sink. Is the water all one temperature, or are there warmer and colder spots. What is the sensation of the soap on your hands? As you pick up a dish or pot to wash, what is its weight? What is the texture of the sponge as you wash the dish? What is the texture of the dish? Is the temperature of the water in the sink cooling? Are your hands in the water a different temperature than your wrists out of the water?
-

More Techniques to Increase Positive Feelings

Gratitude:

Throughout the day, think about all the people who helped ease your day and made it better. For example, when driving to work, think about the people who made the asphalt, and paved the road, and repaired it. Think about the people who built your car, and work at the refinery to make your gas. Think about the people who grew your food, and harvested it, and trucked it to the grocery store, or the people who cooked for you and served you at a restaurant. This will create a strong and surprising shift to feeling more connected, supported, and positive in your life, and lessen a feeling of being alone, unsupported, and like the world is out to get you.

Positive focus:

As part of our survival mechanism, our brains were designed to lock in on and remember negative events and things. Think about the caveman, he had to remember that a sabre-tooth tiger was dangerous to survive. Our brains were not designed to lock in on and remember positive events and things. So, your brain is locking into your memory every negative thing that happens to you, and is not doing that with positive things. This creates an artificial imbalance, and can lead to a very negative feeling about your life.

There is a way to counteract this, and tip the balance in your memory banks back towards the positive. When something good happens to you, someone says something nice to you, you have a nice moment with someone, you achieve a goal, you have a nice time out with friends, or anything positive, take at least 30 seconds to really notice the positive event and take it in. Do this as often as possible, and it will make a strong shift in the brain from the negative to the positive.

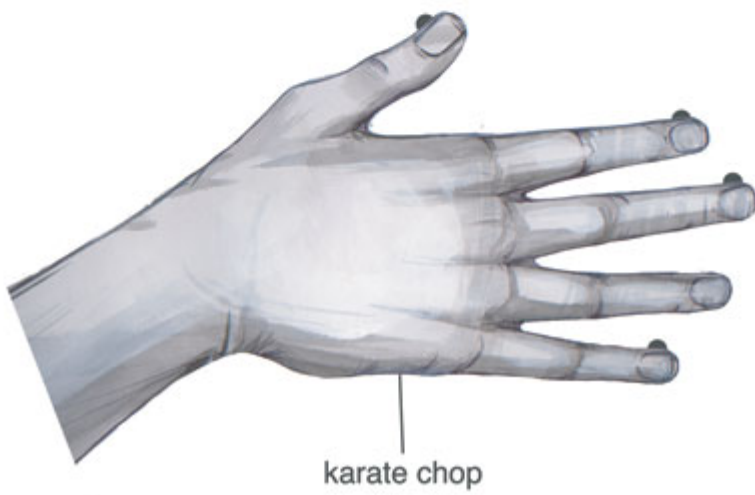
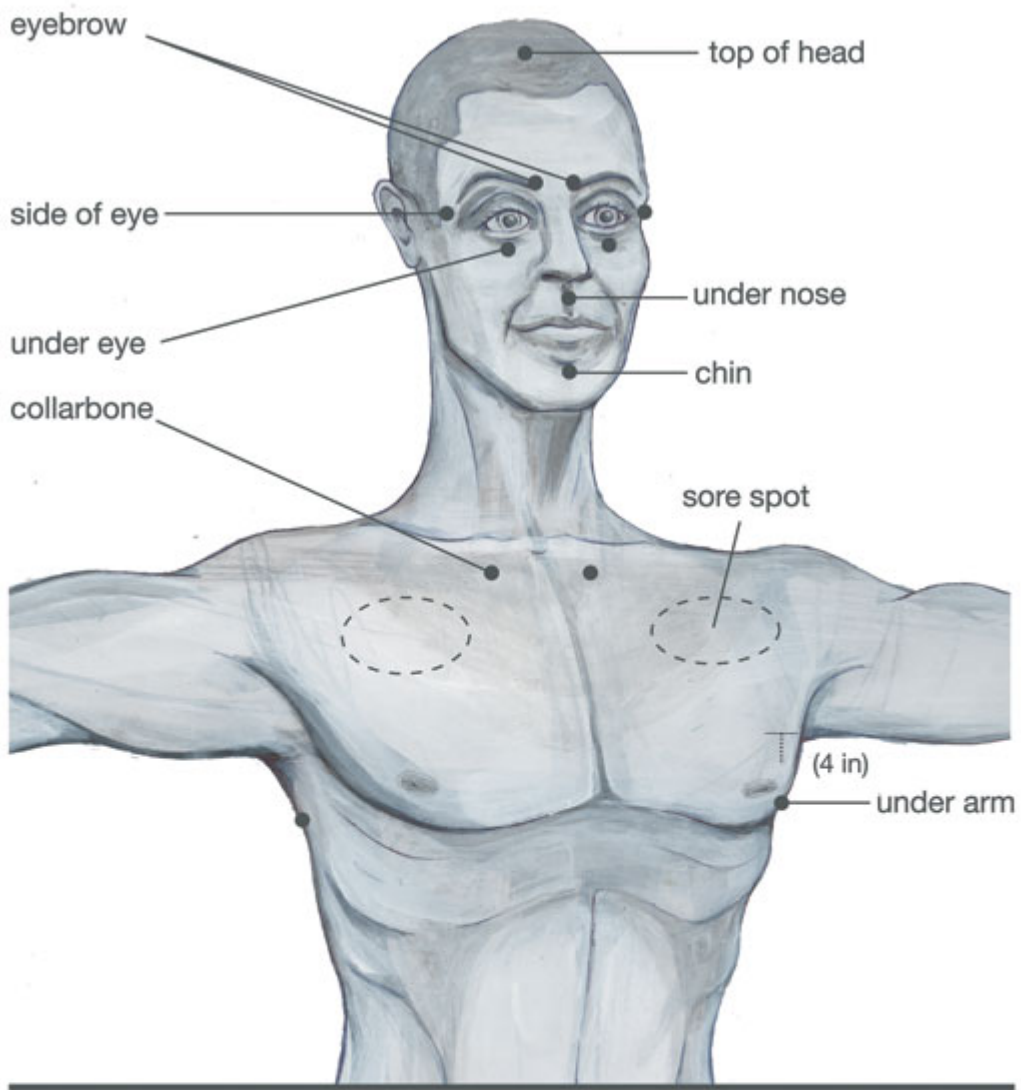
EFT Tapping

Tapping works by calming the nervous system while in the middle of experiencing a negative emotion or feeling in the body. This helps the negative feeling to fully process and clear away. It can immediately relieve feelings of stress and anxiety. It can also work to permanently clear up long-held feelings and issues. The calming occurs by tapping with your fingers on the same points that would be used in acupuncture with a needle. These points represent the ends of branches of your nervous or energetic system. Tapping can be done on your own, and only takes a few minutes.

There are numerous free resources available on the internet and youtube to help you learn how to tap. Search on "Tapping" or "EFT Tapping". Examples include www.thetappingsolution.com and www.tapping.com. The [tappingsolution.com](http://www.thetappingsolution.com) also has a phone app.

Doing the process

1. Start by identifying the issue you would like to work on (e.g., I feel angry, I have an anxious feeling in my chest, etc.).
2. Rate the intensity of the feeling on a scale of 0 - 10 at the current moment where 10 is the most intense; so for example the intensity of your head or back ache, or the intensity of any emotion - fear, anger, sadness etc.
3. Then by either massaging your "sore spot" or by tapping your "karate chop point", say three times...
Even though I have this (insert problem or feeling here) _____, I deeply and completely love (or respect) and accept myself.
4. Then, tapping on each point approximately 7 times each and starting from the eyebrow point, tap on each point in the order they appear down the body. After the under arm point, finish off the cycle at the top of the head. (If the feeling has not cleared, you can add the finger points to the next round of tapping.)
5. Do this tapping sequence twice (point 4) using any two fingers along either side of the body - it is not necessary to tap on both sides and it is completely OK to alternate from one side to another. Using two fingers again seems to work in that it increases the chances of targeting the exact point.
6. Once you have done two rounds of tapping, score the intensity of the problem on a scale of 0 - 10. The problem could have:
 - a. Disappeared completely - well done!
 - b. Reduced in intensity - do more rounds of tapping, adjusting the wording appropriately (e.g. "even though I still feel a bit sad or I have this remaining sadness, I deeply and completely and accept myself")
 - c. Changed to something else or in the case of a physical pain, moved to elsewhere in the body (do further rounds of tapping, adjusting the wording appropriately)
 - d. Increased in intensity - this is relevant feedback and again alter your wording to fit what you are feeling as you do further rounds of tapping.
7. Stop when you feel relief and ready to move on.



Please note that these tapping points proceed down the body, making them easy to memorize.