



STRESS LESS QUEST

Week 6: Breathe Stress-Free

Sometimes, a short breathing routine is all it takes to view a stressful situation in a different light. Breathing is a quick and simple way to stop the stress from creeping in and helps you handle the situation a little easier.

Here are two simple breathing methods you can use the next time you're feeling in over your head:

- **Deep breathing:** Sit up straight, relax your neck and shoulders, and place your elbows at your side, inhaling deeply. Try to hold the inhale for three to five counts, then exhale as slowly as you can.
- **Diaphragm breathing:** Sit up straight and relax your neck and shoulders completely. Put two fingers below your chest and inhale, filling your diaphragm. Your belly and lower ribs should rise while your chest remains stationary. After three counts, exhale slowly. Your belly (diaphragm) should deflate like a balloon.

Once you feel like you've mastered these breathing techniques, try to remember to use them in stressful circumstances. Oftentimes, we are not thinking clearly when we get overwhelmed, but these breathing exercises will help you be more relaxed and handle the situation better.



Weekly Activity: Just Breathe!

Keep track of times you remembered to use your breathing, or note times you think breathing will help you to alleviate stress.

Breathing helps when _____

Breathing helps when _____

Breathing helps when _____

Continued >





Stress Management Tip: Adopt a Healthy Lifestyle

You can increase your resistance to stress by strengthening your physical health.

- **Exercise regularly.** Physical activity plays a key role in reducing and preventing the effects of stress. Make time for at least 30 minutes of exercise, three or more times per week.
- **Eat a healthy diet.** Well-nourished bodies are better prepared to cope with stress, so be mindful of what you eat. Start your day right with breakfast, and keep your energy up and your mind clear with balanced, nutritious meals throughout the day.
- **Reduce caffeine and sugar.** The temporary “highs” caffeine and sugar provide often end with a crash in mood and energy. By reducing the amount of coffee, soft drinks, chocolate, and sugary snacks in your diet, you’ll feel more relaxed, and you’ll sleep better.
- **Avoid alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs.** Self-medicating with alcohol or drugs may provide an easy escape from stress, but the relief is only temporary. Don’t avoid or mask the issue at hand; deal with the problems head-on and with a clear mind.
- **Improve the quality of your sleep.** For a better sleep routine, try turning off electronics 30 minutes before bed, going to bed and waking up at the same time every day (even on weekends), avoiding being hungry or too full at bedtime, and keeping your bedroom dark.

Source: *HelpGuide.org*