








Square Breathing Instructions

What is it?

Square breathing is a stress reduction technique utilizing deep, intentional breaths.

Why do it?

When practiced regularly, this technique has been shown to: ¹

-  Reduce negative physical effects of stress in the body
-  Positively affect emotions and mental wellbeing
-  Increase mental clarity, energy, memory, and focus
-  Improve future reactions to stress
-  Help to manage impulses

How does *that* work?

The short answer is that deep breathing taps into a neural circuit in the brainstem³ that allows us to increase or decrease our brain's reactivity by controlling our breath, thus allowing us to take back control of our nervous systems.

How do I do it?

To practice square or deep breathing, sit or stand in a comfortable position. Ideally, keep your eyes open, but you may close your eyes, if you prefer. Take each breath in and out through your nose.⁴ As you breathe, perform deep “belly breaths” in which you notice your stomach rising and falling with your breathing, and follow this procedure:

- 1) Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose for a count of four.
- 2) Hold that breath for another count of four.
- 3) Exhale through your nose for a count of four.
- 4) Hold for a count of four before your next inhale, and then repeat.

Got any tips?

 The count of 4 is a guideline, adapt to fit your body.

Go slow. Go slow.

However many counts you choose, count *intentionally* and *consciously*.²

Count aloud if it helps.

Some days this may be easy, other days harder. That's okay.

Be patient. The muscles in your lungs need exercise to get stronger, too.

Be kind to yourself while practicing ... and always!

Do this practice frequently throughout the day, every day.

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