

FOOD & MOOD

COACHING

ANCHOR (LONG EXHALE) BREATHING THE 'WHY' AND 'HOW'

WHY?

This Anchor Breathing technique involves exhaling for longer than you inhale; generally aiming for a ratio of 2:1, where the exhale is double that of the inhale. For example, inhale for 3 seconds and exhale for 6 seconds.

We have touched on the sympathetic (fight or flight) and parasympathetic (rest and digest) states of the body. We know that overall, deep and slow breathing stimulates parasympathetic activity, but within any given moment, the body is physiologically in flux between sympathetic and parasympathetic activity. This is normal and natural. The physiological mechanics of breathing fluctuate the body between the sympathetic and parasympathetic state in one round of breath, with the inhale being more sympathetic and the exhale more parasympathetic. This has to do with changes in blood pressure as blood moves in and out of the lungs – O₂ and CO₂ exchange and a few other factors – but in essence the longer we exhale, the more parasympathetic activity we will stimulate.

Extending the exhale to double that of the inhale has also been associated with:

- + Increased lung function
- + Increased CO₂ tolerance resulting in improvements in VO₂max
- + Reduced blood pressure
- + Improved circulation

HOW?

1. Sit with your spine erect, but relaxed (sit on a block, a cushion to assist this posture), OR If you are new to breathing exercises you may find it much more comfortable to lie down on your back. Use a pillow or cushion(s) to support your head and lower back (placing one under your head and another under the back of your thighs, just above the knee crease)
2. Relax your hands either at your sides or on your belly if laying down, on your thighs or if seated.
3. Gently close your lips to inhale and exhale easily through the nose.
4. For your first few rounds of breath, breathe at a pace that is natural and usual for you.
5. Then start to slow your exhalations down to a pace that is double that of your inhale.
6. Start with inhaling for 2 seconds (1-one-thousand, 2-one-thousand) and exhale fully for 4 seconds (1-one-thousand, 2-one-thousand, etc.) Then you may wish to slow the rate to 3 seconds in and 6 seconds out.



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7. As you exhale, feel a sense of grounding and anchoring your body into the surface beneath you, enhancing the relaxation effects of this exercise.
8. Continue breathing in this way for 1 minute, building over time to 3 minutes, 5 minutes and so on.

Important notes:

- + Perform this exercise seated with relaxed head, neck and shoulders
- + Practice for a few breaths through to a few minutes of breaths – 3-5 minutes is a great starting point and building from there
- + Take note of how you feel before engaging in this practice and afterwards. Simply observe

