



## Take A Deep Breath For Mental Health

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When we breathe from our upper body with our shoulders and chest area, we take in about a cup of air with each breath. When we utilize full lung capacity and breathe deeply, we take in about a soda bottle amount of air! Taking slow deep breaths increases oxygen in our bloodstream and thus in our brains, stimulating more executive functions. Deep breathing signals the parasympathetic nervous system to activate and thus induce relaxation throughout the body. As we fill our lungs with air, our diaphragm touches the vagus nerve which then facilitates serotonin to be released. Breathing deeply causes our heart rate to slow and our blood pressure to decrease. Our stress is diminished, we feel fewer negative emotions, and our mind becomes quiet and our thoughts stiller, which lowers anxiety and gives us a great sense of well-being.

So.....how do you do it?

1. Sit or lie flat in a comfortable position.
2. Put one hand on your belly just below your ribs and the other hand on your chest.
3. Take a deep breath in through your nose for 4 counts, and let your belly push your hand out. Your chest should not move.
4. Breathe out through pursed lips for 4 slow counts as if you were whistling. Feel the hand on your belly go in, and use it to push all the air out.
5. Repeat this sequence for 10 times. Take your time with each breath.

