

Gilda's Club Program (breathing exercises)

How you process thoughts is a mental experience that causes an emotional response, but it takes place in our bodies, not in our heads, which is why we feel them so deeply. Your body is taking the emotional information and encoding it as a response and warning to “pay attention.” The reality you experience physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually depends on what states of being you embody at any given moment.

Physiological Sigh — When you need a quick resource or feel overwhelmed or stressed, this breath technique will quickly and effectively shift your body and mind into a more easeful state. You'll be taking two inhales and one exhale. Take a sharp inhale through the nose, into the belly, and then the chest/heart area until you feel full. Then, take one more quick “sip” of air (this is to challenge your comfort zone and build your breath capacity). Follow that with an extended exhale out of your mouth. Make it controlled, and be sure to sigh it out audibly. Do this 3 times up to 10 times.

Espresso Shot Breath — This is an energizing and awakening breath. It's perfect for getting going in the morning or when you need a quick energy boost. Inhale two short breaths through the nose and into the lower abdomen, making sure to expand your belly out rather than sucking it in, and then exhale two short breaths out of your mouth, making a ‘Ha’ sound. Repeat this sequence for 2 minutes. At the end, take a long, deep breath in to cleanse and then an even longer exhale, releasing and softening your body as you do.

5:5 Water Breath — A simple yet effective balancing breath you can use any time, day or evening. It slows your breathing rate down to the recommended 6 breaths per minute. Breathe in through your nose for a count of 5, remembering to fill your belly. Exhale out of your nose with control for a count of 5. Repeat the sequence 10 times.

Circular Breathing - This a wonderful reset breath that you can use any time of day when you need a pause or break. Pair it with going outside, if possible, and enjoy the fresh air! You can inhale either through the mouth or nose; choose what is most comfortable. Inhale and exhale at a steady rate for thirty rounds of breath. There are no pauses between the inhale and exhale. You'll expand the belly on your inhale and softly disperse the breath throughout the body on the exhale. After thirty rounds, hold the exhale until you feel “breath hunger” (pressure or urge that builds to your edge), and then take an inhale and hold full until your body feels ready to release the breath. Repeat this cycle of breath 1 more time.

Three-Part Conscious Connected Breathing — This technique promotes the release of stored emotions and physical tension, leading to a profound state of relaxation and mental clarity. It's a powerful tool for accessing deeper states of healing. Take two inhales through your mouth - either with pursed lips like you're using a straw or with a more open mouth, making a 'Ha' sound at the back of your throat. Draw in air first to your diaphragm (expanding your belly), and then the second inhale draws up into your chest around your heart space. The exhale is a long, easy sigh. This is a continuous breathing rhythm; there are no pauses. Every breath is connected to the next one and connected to the last one. Breathe through your mouth if it is accessible to you; if not, your nose is always an option – do whatever feels best for your body and emotional state in the present moment. Notice what your body naturally craves. Use this breathing pattern for a minimum of 7 minutes and up to 20 minutes with a 5-10 minute rest following the active breathing.

