

# Deep Breathing

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Have you ever been at the top of a hill on a roller coaster and as you are about to descend down you start to feel as though your breath is slowing being depleted from your body? Alternatively, can you remember a time when you have fallen and had the wind knocked out of you leaving you gasping for air, or how about a time when you had the unfortunate experience of having a panic attack? In all of these circumstances we are keenly aware of our breath or lack there of, but during most of our awaking life we are completely unaware of our breath, even though we are just really one breath away from being lifeless.

Being able to breath is the ultimate gift, the gift of life, yet so many of us do not know how to deep breath, which is really correct breathing. Deep breathing engages the diaphragm, which is a large, dome-shaped muscle located at the base of the lungs and gives you the power to empty your lungs. When you empty your lungs correctly you rid your body of carbon dioxide, while breathing deeply supplies your body with restorative oxygen. Oxygen is what are bodies need to run efficiently and is what feeds our cells, helps our brains to be able to problem solve more effectively, improves our digestion, helps regulate our blood pressure, boost our immune system, increases energy, reduced physical tension, and releases endorphins which contribute to our feelings of well-being. Shallow breathing robs us of these healthy benefits that our bodies need to run at an optimal level and studies show shallow breathing stimulates the adrenaline gland which makes us nervous and diminishes our cognitive ability.

An easy way to learn how to breathe better is to practice this simple exercise. Find a comfortable chair or lie on the floor with your head on a pillow and a cushion under your knees. Put one hand on your upper chest and the other hand just below your rib cage. Slowly take a deep breath in through your nose and allow your stomach to push out against your hand while keeping your hand as still as possible. Hold for a count of four and then slowly breathe out again through your nose and continue to do this for another two minutes. Not only will this exercise help you learn how to breathe better, but it will also help focus your mind and clam your nerves during life's stressful moments.