

# PRIOR MINDSET

## BREATHING TECHNIQUES FOR ADULTS AND CHILDREN

Stress and anxiety can significantly impact your overall health, but there are effective breathing techniques that can help induce a relaxation response, promoting a sense of calm and centeredness. Below are several techniques you can incorporate into your daily routine to manage stress and anxiety effectively.

### 1. Lengthen Your Exhale

Deep inhalation isn't always the best way to calm down. Taking deep breaths is linked to the sympathetic nervous system, which triggers the fight-or-flight response.

Conversely, exhaling activates the parasympathetic nervous system, which helps your body relax.



To practice this:

- Start by thoroughly exhaling, pushing all the air out of your lungs.
- Allow your lungs to naturally inhale.
- Try exhaling for a longer period than you inhale. For example, inhale for four seconds and exhale for six.
- Continue this pattern for two to five minutes.
- This technique can be done in any comfortable position, whether standing, sitting, or lying down.

## 2. Abdominal Breathing

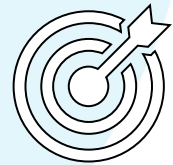
Breathing from your diaphragm, located just beneath your lungs, reduces the effort required to breathe, helping you feel more relaxed.

To practice abdominal breathing:

- Lie down with pillows under your head and knees or sit comfortably with your shoulders relaxed.
- Place one hand under your rib cage and the other on your chest.
- Breathe in through your nose, noticing if your stomach or chest moves.
- Gradually aim to have your stomach rise as you breathe, with minimal chest movement.
- Practice this daily for about 10 minutes, three to four times a day, to make this breathing pattern automatic.

## 3. Breath Focus

When deep breathing is done slowly and mindfully, it can help reduce anxiety. You can practice breath focus while sitting or lying down in a quiet, comfortable space.



To practice breath focus:

- Begin by noticing how it feels to breathe naturally.
- Take a slow, deep breath through your nose, feeling your belly and upper body expand.
- Exhale in a way that feels comfortable, perhaps sighing.
- Repeat for several minutes, focusing on the rise and fall of your belly.
- Choose a calming word to focus on during exhalation, such as "calm" or "safe."

- Visualize your breath washing over you like a gentle wave as you inhale and carry away tension as you exhale.
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#### 4. Equal Breathing

Equal breathing, derived from pranayama yoga, involves inhaling and exhaling for the same length of time.

To practice equal breathing:

- Get comfortable in a sitting or lying-down position.
  - Close your eyes and observe your natural breath for a few moments.
  - Slowly inhale through your nose for a count of four.
  - Exhale for the same count of four.
  - Continue for several minutes, paying attention to the sensations in your lungs.
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#### 5. Resonant Breathing

Resonant breathing, also known as coherent breathing, can help you enter a relaxed state.



To practice resonant breathing:

- Lie down and close your eyes.
- Inhale gently through your nose for six seconds, keeping your lungs comfortably full.
- Exhale gently for six seconds without forcing the breath.
- Continue for up to 10 minutes, then spend a few moments being still and noticing how your body feels.

## 6. Lion's Breath

Lion's breath is a powerful technique that involves a forceful exhale.

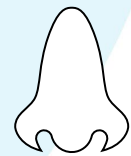
To practice Lion's Breath:

- Kneel with your ankles crossed or sit cross-legged.
- Place your hands on your knees, stretching your arms and fingers.
- Inhale deeply through your nose.
- Exhale forcefully through your mouth, making a "ha" sound.
- Open your mouth wide and stick your tongue out toward your chin as you exhale.
- Focus on the space between your eyebrows or the tip of your nose as you exhale.
- Repeat up to six times, switching the cross of your ankles halfway through.

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## 7. Alternate Nostril Breathing

Alternate nostril breathing helps balance your breathing and calm the mind.



To practice alternate nostril breathing:

- Sit comfortably with your spine straight.
- Place your left hand in your lap and raise your right hand, resting your thumb and fingers on your forehead and nose.
- Close your right nostril with your thumb and inhale slowly through your left nostril.
- Close both nostrils and hold the breath briefly.
- Open your right nostril and exhale slowly.
- Inhale through the right nostril, close both nostrils again, and exhale through the left.

- Repeat up to 10 times, with each cycle taking about 40 seconds.
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## 8. Guided Meditation

Guided meditation can help alleviate anxiety by redirecting your thoughts and promoting relaxation.

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### To practice guided meditation:

- Sit or lie down in a cool, dark, and comfortable space.
- Listen to calming recordings that guide you through the process of visualising a peaceful, stress-free environment.
- Use this practice to develop new habits and thought patterns that reduce anxiety.

### PriorMindset Guide: Teaching Deep Breathing to Children

**Why Deep Breathing is Important for Children:** Children of all ages can benefit from learning deep breathing techniques to help relax their minds and bodies. Deep breathing is an evidence-based strategy that helps children manage big emotions in a healthy way. By activating the parasympathetic nervous system, deep breathing reduces stress and counters the body's fight-or-flight response.

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**How to Teach Deep Breathing:** Teaching deep breathing can be a fun and simple bonding activity. Incorporating playfulness and creativity helps children engage with the techniques. It's best to teach these skills when your child is calm, allowing them to access the techniques more easily during stressful moments. Consistent practice is key, so incorporate deep breathing into daily routines.

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**Age-Appropriate Breathing Techniques:** Here are ten engaging breathing exercises for children:



### 1. Balloon Breath

- Have your child lie down or sit comfortably with hands on their belly.
- Instruct them to imagine their belly as a balloon, expanding on the inhale and deflating on the exhale.

### 2. Counting Breath

- Sit comfortably and model inhaling for a count of 5, holding, then exhaling for a count of 5.
- For a visual aid, draw a square and have your child trace the sides while breathing.

### 3. Snake Breath

- Encourage your child to take a deep belly breath, then exhale with a hissing sound like a snake.
- Practice making loud and soft hissing sounds to improve breath control.

### 4. Teddy Bear Breathing

- Have your child place a stuffed animal on their belly while lying down.
- Watch the stuffed animal rise and fall with each deep breath.

### 5. Bubble Blowing

- Take turns blowing bubbles, coaching your child to take slow, deep breaths to create bigger bubbles.

### 6. Pinwheel Breathing

- Use a pinwheel and instruct your child to blow into it, noticing how different breaths affect its spin.
- Experiment with slow, deep breaths versus quick, forceful ones.

### 7. Pizza Breath

- Have your child hold their hands as if holding a slice of pizza.
- Practice "smelling the pizza" with a slow inhale and "cooling the pizza" with a slow exhale.

### 8. Birthday Candle Breathing

- Ask your child to hold up the number of fingers that matches their age.



- Visualize each finger as a candle and blow out each one slowly with deep breaths.

#### 9. Rainbow Breathing

- Engage your child in pointing to objects in different colours, taking a deep breath as they identify each colour in the rainbow.

#### 10. Glitter Jar Breathing

- Use a glitter jar to demonstrate how calming down is like watching the glitter settle.
- Practice deep breathing while the glitter falls.

**Encouraging Regular Practice:** Incorporate deep breathing into your child's daily routine, such as during morning or bedtime. Make it playful, give your child choices, and model the behaviour to show how deep breathing is part of your routine too.



**Overcoming Disinterest:** If your child resists, try framing deep breathing as a game or integrating it into activities they already enjoy. Allow your child to make choices about the techniques to practice and keep the tone light and playful.

**Summary:** If you're experiencing anxiety or stress, these breathing techniques can be a helpful tool to alleviate symptoms. However, if your anxiety persists or worsens, it's important to consult with a healthcare professional to explore additional treatment options. Visit [www.priormindset.com](http://www.priormindset.com) to book a free 15-minute CBT consultation and discover how I can help you manage and overcome your social phobia challenges.



## **Additional Tools, Videos, and Audio**



### **Books for Children:**

Amazon. (n.d.). *Breathing is My Superpower: Mindfulness book for kids to feel calm and peaceful (My superpower books)*.

<https://www.amazon.com/>

[Breathing is My Superpower: Mindfulness Book for Kids to Feel Calm and Peaceful \(My Superpower Books\): Ortego, Alicia: 9798696592442: Amazon.com: Books](#)

Willard, C., & Rechtschaffen, D. (2019). *Alphabreaths: The ABCs of mindful breathing*. Sounds True. <https://www.amazon.com/>

### **Videos for Children:**

Mindful Kids. (2020, July 23). *Breathing exercise for kids | The flower breath* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/>

New Horizon - Meditation & Sleep Stories. (2019, November 6). *Rainbow relaxation: Mindfulness for children* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/>

Cosmic Kids Yoga. (2020, July 22). *Bubble bounce! Mindfulness for children (Mindful looking)* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/>

### **Adults Resources:**

Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust. (n.d.). *Relaxation techniques*. <https://www.cntw.nhs.uk/resource-library/relaxation-techniques/>

NHS Inform. (n.d.). *Breathing and relaxation exercises*. <https://www.nhsinform.scot/healthy-living/mental-wellbeing/stress/breathing-and-relaxation-exercises/>

NHS. (n.d.). *Mental wellbeing audio guides*. <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/self-help/guides-tools-and-activities/mental-wellbeing-audio-guides/>

Choosing Therapy. (n.d.). *Breathing exercises for kids: How they work & how to practice*. <https://www.choosingtherapy.com/breathing-exercises-for-kids/>