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## **Deep-Breathing Exercises**

One way to ground yourself and bring yourself to a state of calm is by practicing **deep breathing exercises**. Focusing on your breathing (something that all people do) can help you keep negative thoughts at bay and prevent worrying because you are focusing on something else with deep concentration. The most important thing with any relaxation exercise is to practice it regularly so that it becomes “routine.” In the beginning, it may induce a little stress because it’s new (not routine). The goal is to make it feel so “normal” to you that your body physiologically responds by relaxing as soon as you start the exercise. Remember: don’t do these exercises if you have medical reasons not to, and consult your doctor first if you have limitations.

### Postures

You can do deep breathing anywhere without being too obvious—standing in line somewhere, sitting in class, etc. There are some specific postures that are recommended, though. Don’t do it while lying down (unless you are trying to go to sleep).

- Try sitting on the floor with your legs crossed and your palms resting on your knees facing upward. Closing your eyes can help with concentration and not getting distracted. To help you stay grounded, firmly plant your seat bottom into the floor. Keep your back straight, your chin raised slightly upward, and your shoulders pushed back slightly for the best results.
- Alternatively, try sitting on the floor in the same way but put your hands on your stomach, just under your belly button, to feel your breathing.
- If you do it while standing, firmly plant your feet into the floor. Keep your shoulders pushed slightly back, your back straight, and your chin tilted slightly upward.

### Steps

- Keep your mouth closed as you inhale.
- Inhale very deeply through your nose, for 4 seconds or longer (counting to one-one-thousand, two-one-thousand can help you track the seconds and stay focused).
- Hold your breath for 1-2 seconds.
- Then fully exhale, letting all the air release. You can breathe out through your mouth for a harder exhalation (although this makes noise, so is not as unobservable).
- If you can, breathe in and out through your stomach (use your hands to feel if your stomach is inflating or deflating when you breathe, instead of just your lungs—your stomach can move when you do deep breathing with it).

Your mind will want to wander. Just keep bringing your focus back to your breathing and counting. This takes practice to work and calm you. Try it for a few minutes at a time and slowly build up to longer periods. The more comfortable you become with deep breathing, the more it will help relax and calm you.