

## 3 Minute Breathing Exercise for Stress Management

For many of us, deep breathing seems unnatural as we carry tension and stress. We are prone to short, shallow breaths or "chest breathing" and this means the lowest part of the lungs does not get a full share of oxygenated air. Chest breathing becomes a self-perpetuating activity because it increases anxiety, contributing to further tension and stress.

Deep abdominal breathing encourages full oxygen exchange — that is, the beneficial trade of incoming oxygen for outgoing carbon dioxide. Not surprisingly, it can slow the heartbeat and lower or stabilize blood pressure.<sup>1</sup>

Now here's the fix ...

Remember to exercise your breathing by anchoring it to an activity, for instance, every time you have a cup of tea or coffee. By being intentional, it is more likely that you will carry through with the activity so, every time you put the kettle on to boil ...

1. Stand or sit straight.
2. Breath in deeply through your nose for a count of 7, allowing your belly to expand as your lungs fill.
3. Hold the breath for a count of 4.
4. Blow the breath out through pursed lips for a count of 7.
5. Do this 3 or 4 times.
6. Then, concentrate on regular, gentle breaths while the kettle reaches a boil.

With time and practice, this will become a good habit and while reducing your stress and oxygenating your blood, it will make clear thinking more achievable.

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Dementia expert [Teepa Snow](#) talks about the importance of deep breathing in this 4-minute video. She is speaking to a group of dementia caregivers, but the message is good for anyone carrying stress.



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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/relaxation-techniques-breath-control-helps- quell-errant-stress-response>