



This week...

Breathe to Relieve

Are you having a hard day? Overflowing to-do list? Conflicts or tensions? Continuous interruptions?

Breathing is a tool that can help you gain more control over turbulent feelings, as well as provide the space you need to think clearly about what to do next. Aside from our brain being strained, we also experience a **physical response** when stressed. Our muscles constrict, cortisol rises, and we become flooded with sensory input.

Breathing is a **quick, free and readily available strategy** to help immediately soothe your body's physical response and stop it from going out of control!

Mindful breathing can trigger a relaxation response. Here are some of its **benefits**:

- Lowers blood pressure and heart rate
- Reduces levels of stress hormones in the blood
- Improves immune system functioning
- Reduces anxiety
- Controls or reduces anger response
- Reduces lactic acid build up in muscle tissue
- Balances the levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in blood
- Increases feelings of calm and wellbeing
- Can aid your sleep
- Increases physical energy

Take two minutes out of your day to do a breathing exercise.

Here are three breathing exercises you can try – 3 for relaxing and one for energizing:

The 4 – 7 – 8 Breathing Exercise *(for encouraging relaxation)*

[Watch a video on this technique to learn more.](#)

1. Adopt a comfortable sitting position and place the tip of your tongue on the tissue right behind your top front teeth.
2. Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose for a mental count of **4**.
3. Hold your breath for a count of **7**.
4. Exhale completely through your mouth, making a 'whoosh' sound to a count of **8**. This is one breath.
5. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle 3 more times for a total of 4 breaths.

Square Breathing *(a 2-minute breathing exercise that can take shape of a bubble!)*

[Use this link to guide you.](#)

1. Inhale for four seconds
2. Hold for four seconds
3. Exhale for four seconds
4. Hold for four seconds
5. And repeat!

Lazy Breathing *(a fun breathing technique to try with kids!)*

Refer to the diagram below and follow the arrows.

1. Starting from the middle, trace the left loop (blue) with your finger while you breathe in.
2. When you get to the middle of the diagram again, breathe out while you trace the right loop (green) with your finger.

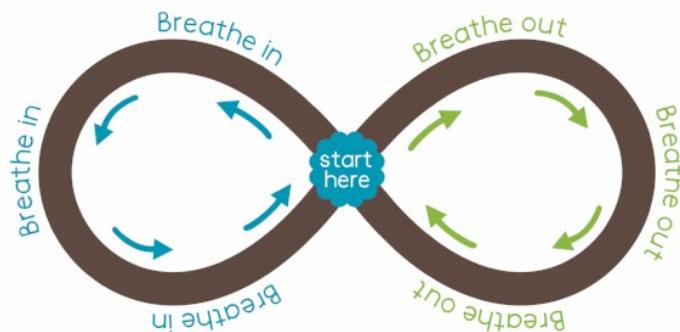


Figure 1 copingskillsforkids.com/deep-breathing-exercises-for-kids

The Stimulating Breath/Bellows Breath *(for increasing your energy and alertness)*

Adapted from Dr. Weill

1. Inhale and exhale rapidly through your nose, while keeping your mouth closed but relaxed – **do not** tense up your jaw!
2. Breaths going in and out should be equal in duration, but as short as possible.
3. Try doing 3 in-and-out breath cycles per second. This produces a quick movement of the diaphragm.
4. Breathe normally after each cycle. **Do not do for more than 15 seconds on your first try.** Each time you practice the Stimulating Breath, increase your time by 5 seconds or so until you reach a full minute.

You should feel the effort at the back of the neck, the diaphragm, the chest, and the abdomen. Try this diaphragmatic breathing exercise the next time you need an energy boost.

There are many different breathing techniques – look online and pick one that works best for you and your needs!

If you would like to contribute, or have ideas about what you would like to see in the **ReFresh** series, we would love to hear from you: contact rochelle@bcpvpa.bc.ca.