

Breath Control

Breath Control training is very similar to some of the meditation techniques used in East Asia. Many people find it to be a very effective technique for increasing relaxation. As the name suggests, you will learn to breathe in a specific way that triggers the relaxation response. There is no set amount of time to do this. You could practice it from as little as five minutes to as long as an hour. The following procedure is not a script to be read, but a description of the technique you will follow.

Procedure

- 1. Find a comfortable place to sit where you will be free from potential distractions. In some Asian traditions, meditators will actually perform this breathing exercise in conjunction with some sort of body movements like Yoga, Tai Chi, or Kung Fu. You, however, can experience it from a sitting position. If you get distracted, gently bring your mind back to the target focus, your breathing.*
- 2. Inhale deeply through your nostrils to a slow count of four, expanding your lower belly deeply. (You can even put one hand on your diaphragm or lower belly to feel it rise and fall as you breathe.) The inhale should be easy and relaxed, without straining. When you have finished the inhale and reached the count of four, your lower belly should be pushed out.*
- 3. Pause briefly.*
- 4. Exhale through your mouth in a very slow and relaxed manner. As you do, slowly count to 10. You may hear an “ahhhhhhhhhh” sound as you exhale. Your exhale should be effortless and easy. You should feel your lower belly and diaphragm relax as you exhale. You may need to shorten the count if you can’t sustain the exhalation for a count of 10 without effort. The keys are that the inhalation and exhalation should be slow and unforced, and that the exhalation should take about twice as long as the inhalation.*
- 5. Repeat this breathing procedure for 5 minutes or more.*