



# COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

*Bringing the University to You*

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## *Breathing Exercises for Stress Reduction*

**Dr. Papa Huluhazu, Area Extension Specialist**  
**Willie Daugherty, Teaching Assistant II**

From a physical viewpoint, breath is our connection to life. We can go without food for 30 days, without water for three days, but three minutes without breath and we experience serious harm or die. Most people think that if they are breathing in and out, they are healthy. However, we must breathe deeply and fully for our bodies to get the oxygen necessary for good health. Learning how to breathe properly can relax the body and mind. People who practice breathing exercises daily find that breathing properly alleviates stress, anger and in some cases, depression. Breathing exercises will create a greater sense of well-being.

### *NATURAL BREATH*

This exercise will help you develop an awareness of your natural breathing pattern.

- Sit or stand straight.
- If possible, breath through your nose. While inhaling, fill the lower section of your lungs.
- Notice how your chest raises and your lower ribs expand.
- Hold your breath for a few seconds.
- Exhale slowly, allowing your abdomen to relax.
- When you have exhaled completely, your body will feel relaxed.
- Repeat this sequence at least five times.
- By raising your shoulders and collarbone during the inhalation, you will become more aware of your breathing process.

With practice these steps can be performed in one continuous, smooth inhalation.

### *PURIFYING BREATH*

This exercise cleans your lungs while stimulating and toning your entire breathing process thus refreshing your body. It may be used in conjunction with the other breathing exercises.

- Sit or stand straight.
- Inhale a complete natural breath, as described in the previous exercise.
- Hold this breath for several seconds.
- Exhale a little of the air with force through a small opening in your lips.
- Stop exhaling for a moment, then blow out more air.
- Repeat this procedure until you have exhaled all the air.
- Practice for several minutes.

## *RELAXING BREATH*

This is a good exercise to quickly relax you while making you feel more alert.

- Stand straight with your hands at your sides.
- As you inhale slowly, lightly tap your chest with your fingertips, moving your hand around so that your entire chest is tapped.
- When you have inhaled as much air as feels comfortable, hold your breath and pat your chest with your palms.
- Exhale using the purifying breath described in the previous exercise.
- Practice a few more purifying breaths.
- When you have completely exhaled, tap the entire body with your palms.
- Repeat the Tap-away tension exercise as many times as it feels comfortable.

## *TOP- AWAY TENSION*

This breathing exercise will supply your body with the needed amount of oxygen and will alleviate some tension.

- Sit or stand straight.
- Sigh deeply, letting out a sound of deep relief as the air rushes out of your lungs.
- Let the air return to your lungs slowly and naturally.
- Repeat eight to twelve times.

*Remember to keep breathing!*



### **References:**

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**For more information contact Papa Huluwazu at (702) 222-3130.**

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