

Health and Well-Being

Focus this month is Breathe!

"If I had to limit my advice on healthier living to just one tip, it would be simply to learn how to breathe correctly" - Andrew Weil M.D.

Deep breathing can:

1. Manage stress and anxiety
2. Lower/stabilize blood pressure
3. Increase energy levels
4. Muscle relaxation

When you experience stressful thoughts, your sympathetic nervous system triggers the body's fight or flight response, giving you a burst of energy to respond to a perceived danger. Your breathing becomes shallow and rapid, and you primarily breathe from the chest and not the lower lungs. This can make you short of breath, which is a common symptom when you feel anxious or frustrated, at the same time, your body produces a surge of hormones such as cortisol and adrenaline, which increases your blood pressure and pulse rate and puts you in a revved up state of high alert.

With deep breathing, you can reverse these symptoms instantly and create a sense of calm in your mind and body. When you breathe deeply and slowly, you activate the parasympathetic nervous system, which reverses the stress response in your body.

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 blood pressure.

- Try some deep breathing for better health!
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound.
- Close your mouth and inhale quietly through your nose to a mental count of four.
- Hold your breath for a count of seven.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, making a whoosh sound to a count of eight.
- This is one breath. Now inhale again and repeat the cycle three more times for a total of four breaths.

Resource recommendations: *Breathing: The Master Key to Self-Healing*, Andrew Weil M.D., *The Breathing Book: Good Health and Vitality Through Essential Breath Work*, Donna Farhi.

Blessings and good health, Linda Dove, Ginia Finch, Mandria Montplaiser, Ava Taylor

Sources:

<http://www.health.harvard.edu>,
<http://www.drweil.com>