

# Does School Have You Feeling Stressed Out?



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# When Was the Last Time You Took a Deep Breath?

In April of 2013, Western University participated in the National College Health Assessment (NCHA) by the American College Health Association. The assessment surveyed students about their health and mental health habits, behaviours, and perceptions. The response rate for Brescia was 17%. 49% of Brescia students have experienced stress and 42% of have experienced anxiety which has affected their academic performance.

Why has taking up meditation practices and yoga become so popular in the last few years? Because research shows how beneficial deep breathing is for your overall well-being; for both immediate stress relief and lasting physiological advantages.

How? From your brain to your vital organs, breathing oxygenates every cell in your body, and without sufficient oxygen, your body can develop health problems. Therefore, deep breathing can actually promote health, from improving mental performance to decreasing levels of anxiety and stress. The breath is linked to the autonomic nervous system. Daily breathing practices activate the parasympathetic nervous system which is associated with resting & digesting. Breathing promotes calmness in your body & mind.



## Facts about Breathing:

Breathing practices decrease stress by decreasing the body's levels of stress hormones such as cortisol.

Breathing practices can reduce pain and the activation of pain centers in the brain.

Breathing practices can alter the genes responsible for stronger immunity.

## Benefits of Breathing:

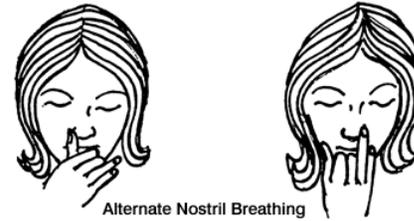
Reduces anxiety & depression

Increases happiness

Improves sleep

Helps with the ability to regulate emotions

# Try at Home:

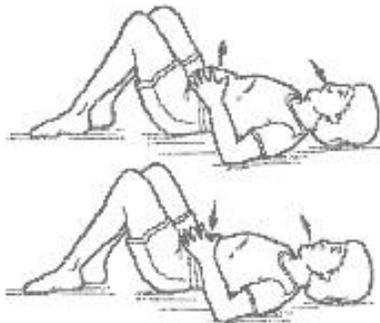


## Abdominal Breathing

The goal of this breathing exercise is to relax and relieve stress.

1. Put one hand on your chest and the other on your belly just below the ribs.
2. Take in a deep breath through your nose, inflating the diaphragm with enough air that your belly should push your hand out (chest does not move).
3. Breathe out through your mouth, feeling your belly go down.
4. Do this exercise 3-8 times, taking your time with each breath.

Abdominal (or Belly) Breathing is best for before a stressful event, such as an exam.



## Alternate Nostril Breathing

The goal of this breathing technique is to quickly calm your mind and body, while giving you an instant energy boost.

1. Using your right hand in front of your face, and use your thumb to close off your right nostril.
2. Inhale slowly and deeply through your left nostril.
3. Remove your thumb from your right nostril and close off your left nostril with your ring finger.
4. Exhale slowly and gently through your right nostril.
5. Inhale slowly through your right nostril.
6. Now, remove your ring finger from your left nostril while closing your right nostril again with your thumb.
7. Exhale slowly and gently through your left nostril.
8. Now begin step 1 again, but this time inhaling through your left nostril.
9. When first starting to use this breathing technique, begin with one or two rounds, gradually making your way up to ten rounds.

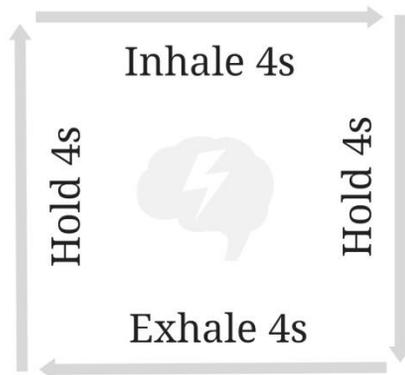
Alternate Nostril Breathing is a good breathing exercise for any time of day, whether you are stressed or just need to take a moment to concentrate on something else.

## Box Breathing

The goals of this breathing exercise is to bring the respiratory system back into alignment and diminish stress by ending the shallow breathing that causes the 'fight or flight' response.

1. Find a quiet space. Sit up straight in a chair and put your feet flat on the ground with your hands relaxed on your lap. Close your eyes.
2. Breathe slowly through your nose, counting to 4 as you inhale. Hold your breath for 4 seconds (allowing a few seconds for the air to fill your lungs). Concentrate on your belly, noticing how it moves when you inhale.
3. Exhale slowly through your mouth, counting to 4. Hold the exhale for another count of 4.
4. Do this exercise for 4 minutes (or at least a minimum of 3 times).

Box breathing also works well during meditation.



## Calm Breathing

The goal of this breathing exercise is to calm the nervous system, diminish stress and decrease anxiety while increasing focus.

1. Take a deep breath through your nose for 4 counts.
2. Hold your breath for 1-2 seconds.
3. Exhale through your nose for 4 counts.
4. Wait a few seconds before taking the next breath.

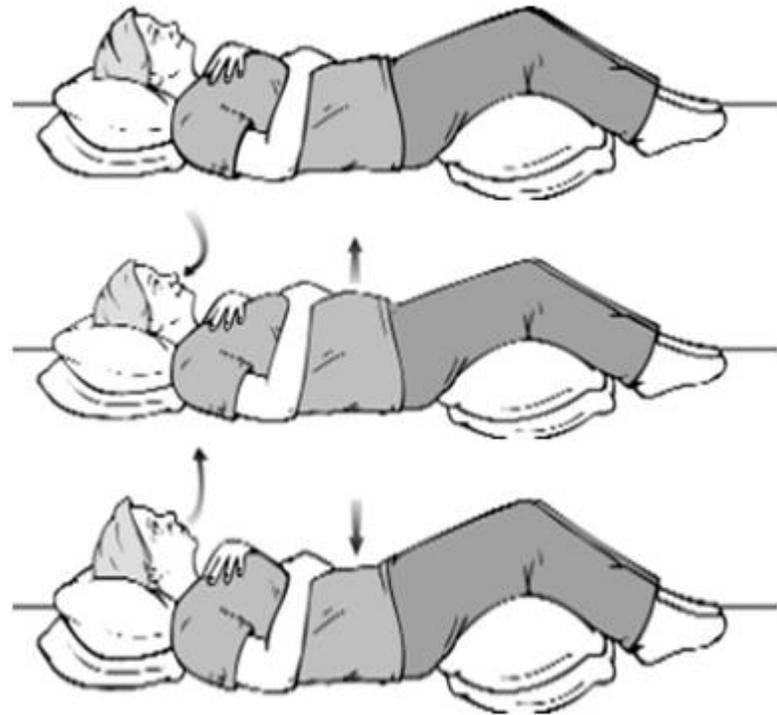
Calm Breathing is a good breathing exercise for any time of the day, but has been known to best work before bed because it is similar to counting sheep.



## Roll Breathing

The goal of this breathing exercise is to be used as an instant relaxation tool.

1. Lay on your back. Put your left hand on your belly and your right hand on your chest.
2. Practice filling your lower lungs by breathing so that your left hand (belly) goes up when you inhale (chest should not move). Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.
3. Do this 8-10 times.
4. Now add a second step: inhale first into your lower lungs as you did before, and then continue inhaling into your upper chest, breathing slowly and regularly. As you do this, your right hand (chest) will rise and your left hand (belly) will fall a little.
5. Now when you exhale, make a quiet whooshing sound, feeling the tension leaving your body as you become more relaxed.
6. Practice this second step for 3-5 minutes, noticing that the rise and fall of your belly and chest are like the motion of rolling waves.



Feeling dizzy is not the goal of this exercise; some people feel dizzy the first few times using this technique. If you feel dizzy, slow your breathing and get up slowly.

# Free Helpful Apps and Additional Resources to Support your Journey of Breathing:



Breath2Relax



Universal Breathing –  
Pranayama Free



Pacifica



Relax Lite: Stress and Anxiety  
Relief



Stop, Breath & Think App



Headspace

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St. James Building | Brescia University College | 1285 Western Road | London, ON | N6G 1H2 | 519-432-8353

 Student-Life Centre

 @Brescia\_SLC

