**Feel Better in 5**

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**Simple Breathing**

* ﻿It’s particularly good when you’re feeling anxious or are in physical pain. If your mobility is limited and you struggle to get on the floor or up again, you can easily do this sitting in a comfortable chair or while lying in bed.
* Lie down flat on the floor and set a timer for five minutes.
* Place one hand on your tummy and one on your chest.
* Take a deep breath in through your nose. (If your nose is blocked, breathe through your mouth.) Try to breathe so that the hand on your tummy is the only one that initially moves. A good tip is to try to keep your shoulders relaxed as you are breathing. This helps encourage the breath to come from your diaphragm rather than your chest, which helps promote relaxation. You may find this a little tricky if you have never done this before. Keep practicing though, as this exercise becomes easier over time.
* ​When you feel as if you cannot easily take any more breath in with your tummy moving outwards, take in an extra bit—this final bit will come from your upper chest and, as you are taking it, you will feel the hand on your chest starting to move.
* Now breathe out fully, feeling your belly flatten as you do so. As you breathe out, both of your hands will be moving. This exhale should feel as if it takes a little bit longer than the inhale. Don’t worry about timing this.
* **Do this ten times.**
* As you go through the exercise, you’ll find that distracting thoughts will start to pop into your head. This is OK and fully to be expected. This happens to everyone, including experienced meditators.
* The idea is not to banish or block these thoughts. If you try to do this, you may well increase the tension in your body, which in turn can activate the body’s stress response. Instead, simply acknowledge these thoughts and feelings. Watch them come and go in a spirit of detached curiosity. As soon as you notice that you’ve become distracted, slowly and smilingly return your attention to the breath.
* After ten breaths, return to a normal rhythm of breathing in and breathing out, continuing to notice where the breath is coming in and going out.
* **Continue this process for a total of five minutes.**

**Breath Counting**

* ﻿Practice being mindful by counting each of your out-breaths. This is a simple technique inspired by methods used by practitioners of Zen Buddhism. It’s particularly good if you struggle with concentrating for long periods or if you find it hard to pay attention. It is great for enhancing focus. The gentle practice of paying attention to your breath also helps you to become more mindful throughout the day. You might find it useful to make sure the airways in your nose are clear before you start.
* Sit upright in your chair and set a timer for five minutes. Make sure your back is comfortably straight.
* Take a few deep breaths in and out through your nose (or through your mouth if your nose is blocked).
* Now, allow the breath to return to its normal rate and rhythm.
* On the first exhale, count “1” inside your head. On the second exhale, count “2” inside your head. Keep counting on every exhale until you get to “5.” Try to stay focused on your breathing the entire time.
* Once you get to “5,” start counting again from “1” on the next exhale. Once again, continue counting on each exhale until you get to “5.” Keep repeating this cycle, over and over again.
* If you feel your mind has wandered and you’ve stopped counting, don’t worry. It’s completely natural and a part of the process. Gently and lovingly acknowledge what has happened, go back to “1,” and start counting again.
* Sometimes your mind might wander for quite some time and you’ll find yourself counting beyond “5.” I once went all the way to “30” before I realized what had happened. This is also fine. Once you’re aware that your mind has wandered, gently return your attention to the breath and start from “1” again.
* ​Do this for five minutes.