



*“If you want to conquer the anxiety of life, live in the moment, live in the breath.” —Amit Ray*

Shallow breathing may lead to tension and fatigue. Breathing with your diaphragm tends to reduce stress and improve energy.

**Abdominal breathing**, or **diaphragmatic breathing**, is a powerful way to decrease stress by activating relaxation centers in the brain. The abdominal expansion causes negative pressure to pull blood into the chest, improving the venous flow of blood back to the heart.

When you mindfully incorporate abdominal breathing exercises into your daily routine, you may find that focusing your attention on your breath during stressful moments becomes easier to do. This is an important skill that can help you deal with stress, anxiety, and negative emotions in a positive way. Mindful, deep breathing can also help sharpen your ability to concentrate.

The following abdominal breathing exercise, often called **4-7-8 breathing**, can help you start breathing mindfully:

- Find a comfortable place to sit or lie down, with your feet slightly apart, one hand on your abdomen near the navel, and the other hand on your chest.
- Gently exhale the air in your lungs through your mouth, then inhale slowly through your nose to the count of **four**, pushing out your abdomen slightly and concentrating on your breath. As you breathe in, imagine warm air flowing all over your body. Hold the breath for a count of at least four but not more than **seven**.
- Slowly exhale through your mouth while counting to **eight**. Gently contract your abdominal muscles to completely release the remaining air in the lungs.
- Repeat until you feel deeply relaxed for a total of five cycles. You may be able to do only one or two cycles at first.
- Once you feel comfortable with your ability to breathe into the abdomen, it is not necessary to use your hands on your abdomen and chest.

