

Use breathing to lower stress

What do you do to relax? Many people sit down with their smartphones or in front of a TV. But these things may not actually help you de-stress. They could make you even more stressed, especially if you're watching the news or social media.

To fight stress, you need to engage the body's ability to relax. Your body has a natural way to decrease heart rate, blood pressure and muscle tension. This helps you cope with stress in healthy ways. It can decrease anxiety, too. And it only involves slow, deep breathing and some focus.



TIME TO BREATHE

Take a few minutes each day to do this exercise. You may find it makes a huge difference in your stress levels!

- Lie down or sit in a comfortable chair.
- Close your eyes and put one hand on your belly.
- Think about your breathing. Is it fast or slow? Does your hand move up and down when you breathe in and out?
- Slowly bring more air into your lungs. Allow your belly to inflate like a balloon as you breathe in.
- Let the air out gently, letting your belly flatten back down.

Do this for about five minutes to start. Then, increase to 10 minutes or more as you can. Try to do it every day. You're worth the few minutes it takes to release stress and feel better.

Source: U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs