

EXHALE PRESS

REDUCE STRESS AND BOOST FOCUS IN LESS THAN A MINUTE

The best thing to do when feeling stressed is to take a deep breath because it sends the well-needed oxygen all around the body. That makes sense, but it can be tricky because sometimes the whole front of their body feels tensed and stuck. Trying to take a deep breath in moments like this can actually create a negative impact because of frustration and self-judgments that arise as a result of not being able to do a simple thing like taking a deep breath.



After experiencing this with myself and others I found a simple solution to help with softening the front of the body in a way that makes taking a deep breath easy and natural. It's an easy exercise that you can do at any moment and situation and it works. I call **Exhale Press**.

The inspiration for this exercise came from the voice lessons with the two incredible singers *David Azurza* and *Sohini Alam* whilst I was touring the show *Until The Lions with Akram Kahn*. While we were warming up for the shows I learned that instead of taking a deep breath before singing I should focus more on relaxing and using the air I already had in my lungs.

Exhale Press is based on that insight. So instead of taking a deep breath, you first focus on exhaling. In addition to the exhale we also squeeze the centre of the body because it helps to relax the muscles in the area and as a result, you naturally feel as if there's more space for air to come in.

I recommend doing the exercise standing up as you'll feel more control but it can also work when sitting down or even lying down.

Remember to trust the fact that you already have enough air in you so you don't need to worry about inhaling first. We'll get to the inhaling later and when we do you'll notice that you can do it with much more ease.

It might take a few tries before you feel totally comfortable with it but very quickly you'll be able to use this exercise to reduce stress and feel calmer and focused in less than a minute.

Here is how it works

1) Stand up

Stand up with a straight back. Get yourself comfortable.

2) Exhale and squeeze

Exhale slowly through the mouth and squeeze the centre of your body. At the same time, you're doing the slow exhale start squeezing the centre of your body (your belly and your genitals) as much as you can whilst keeping the rest of your body (legs, neck, arms, shoulders) relaxed.

Something that can help describe the intention and the feeling is the idea that you're trying to squeeze your bellybutton out through your back and that the centre of the body is like a wet cloth which is being squeezed from all sides

3) Hold it

When you exhale fully (always check if there's any leftover air in you), you've reached your limit and you cannot exhale or squeeze any more hold your breath for a few seconds and stay in that position as long as you can.

4) Release

Then all you have to do is release the belly and the breath. You don't need to take a breath here. Think about it as if you're pulling the plug that holds your breath. All you need is to let go and you'll notice that air flows naturally into the body.

5) Repeat

Repeat this process a few times and you'll notice how your muscles get softened and your body feels more open.

Once you've done this you'll notice that you can take a deep breath with much more ease. Most people feel a big shift already after one round of exercise.

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