



Box Breathing: Mental Health Benefits And Tips For Beginners

If you've ever taken a long, deep breath at the end of a stressful day, you probably know the calming effect it can have. Research shows the practice of controlled, deep breathing offers a number of positive effects on the body and mind. One such deep-breathing exercise is box breathing. This simple, four-step technique not only helps you de-stress, but it may also be helpful in treating anxiety, depression, and even pain.

What is box breathing?

Box breathing is a deep-breathing exercise that helps promote relaxation. Deep breathing is also known as “diaphragmatic breathing,” “abdominal breathing,” or “belly breathing.”

The exercise is called “box breathing” because it uses the image of a box, which has four sides, to help you pace your breathing in four steps. It's also known as “square breathing,” “four-square breathing,” or “4×4 breathing.”

Benefits of box breathing

When you become anxious or stressed, your body prepares as if it's confronting danger. Your heart rate and blood pressure increase, your muscles tense, and your breathing becomes shallow. Some people may feel short of breath, which can make them feel even more anxious. Box breathing helps counter the stress response by bringing on the relaxation response. As your breathing becomes deeper, your heartbeat slows, muscles relax, and your blood pressure decreases or stabilizes.

A 2023 study of breathing exercises, including box breathing, suggests that daily, 5-minute breathwork reduces anxiety and improves mood. In fact, participants in the study showed greater improvement in mood and physiological responses with breathwork than with mindfulness meditation.

Other research has suggested box breathing can be helpful in reducing negative emotions, improving attention and cognitive performance, lowering blood pressure and improving symptoms of depression.

How to practice box breathing

Box breathing involves four simple steps.

As you do the exercise, the idea is to visualize a box with four equal sides. You can do this with your eyes closed or with a soft gaze. With each step, imagine you're following or tracing one side of the box. Start at the top corner, and work your way around the box until you return to the starting point.

1. Following the top side of the box, breathe in slowly through your nose for a count of four.
2. As you follow down one side of the box, hold your breath for a count of four.
3. Following the bottom side, breathe out slowly for a count of four, releasing all the air from your lungs.
4. Going up the other side of the box, hold your breath for a count of four.

If 4 seconds feels too long or too short, you can adjust your count for each step (for example, breathe or hold for 2 or 3 seconds, instead of four).

Try to repeat this sequence three to four times.

*Soil Lovers say: **Breathe Your Stress Away***

Ref: <https://psychcentral.com/health/box-breathing>