



# Breathe!

You're 15 minutes late. Stuck in traffic. Feel a headache coming on.

## What do you do?

1. Blare your horn?
2. Pull over and scream?
3. Take a deep breath?

**Bingo for number three! Take a deep breath!** Breathing is one of the easiest and healthiest actions you can take in stressful situations. We take breathing for granted and, in times of stress, we hold our breath or breathe so shallowly that our bodies simply don't get enough oxygen. Deep breathing, also known as "belly or diaphragmatic" breathing, counters stress, decreases headache pain, helps battle high blood pressure, and provides our bodies with the oxygen they need to build muscle endurance.

Most of us live in overdrive. We've forgotten how to slow down and breathe properly—from our diaphragm, the muscle between the chest and abdomen.

So, if you're feeling a bit of tension, remember to take five and take a good deep breath. Here's how:

- Place your hand on your stomach underneath your diaphragm. Take a long deep breath (count to five as you breathe) in through your nose. Notice your stomach rising as you inhale deeply.
- Hold this breath for five seconds.
- Slowly release the breath through your mouth and tighten your lips as if you were whistling. (This is known as pursed-lip breathing.)
- Release as much air as possible to empty your lungs.
- Repeat three to four times.

**Give it a try, you'll be surprised.** Can you feel your body unwind? As a reminder, write "Breathe" on a sticky note and put it somewhere on your desk or dashboard in your car or wherever you think you might need a reminder to breathe!

**More breathing. More relaxation. More you.**



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