

# Breathing for Your Mental Health

Research has found that breathing practices are effective at reducing stress, balancing our energy and emotions, and helping us process some of the more challenging feelings that can arise in our lives. Utilize the breathing techniques below to start incorporating breathing into your self-care routine.

## Belly Breathing

Shallow, upper chest breathing is part of the typical stress response but with practice can be adjusted. When you breathe, your belly should expand, involving your diaphragm, a large muscle in your abdomen. To begin put one hand on your chest and the other on your belly, take a deep breathe in through your nose and let your belly push your hand out for a count of 3, pause, exhale through your mouth while slowly counting to three. This type of breathing is known as diaphragmatic, or belly breathing, and can lower stress levels, reduce blood pressure, lower our heart rate, and help us relax.

## 4-7-8 Breathing Technique

Otherwise known as “relaxing breath,” 4-7-8 breathing, is a simple breathing exercise that can be done anywhere, anytime to aid in stress reduction, grounding, and even sleep. Inhale for a count of 4, hold for a count of 7, and then exhale for a count of 8. Repeat this cycle as many times as you would like!

## Square Breathing

Square breathing can shift your current feelings, connect you more deeply with your body, calm your nervous system and decrease stress. Begin by slowly exhaling all your air out, then inhale through your nose to a slow count of 4, hold at the top of the breath for a count of 4, then gently exhale through your mouth for a count of 4. At the bottom of the breath pause and hold for the count of 4.

For more information and resources visit [www.Wellness4US.org](http://www.Wellness4US.org). If you need help immediately, reach out to the Suicide Prevention and Crisis Lifeline of the Central Coast 24/7 at **9-8-8**.



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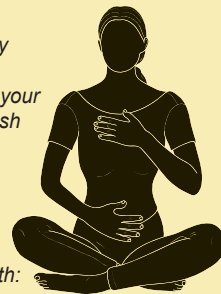
*One hand on your chest  
and the other on your belly*

**Deep breathe in** through your  
nose and let your belly push  
your hand out:

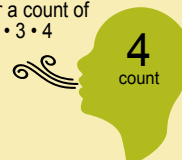
**Count: 1 • 2 • 3**

**Pause**

**Exhale through your mouth:**  
**Count: 1 • 2 • 3**



Inhale for a count of  
1 • 2 • 3 • 4



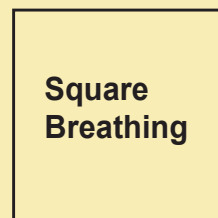
Hold for a count of  
1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7



Exhale for a count of  
1 • 2 • 3 • 4 • 5 • 6 • 7 • 8

**Slowly... Exhale... 2... 3... 4**

**Hold... 2... 3... 4**



**Hold... 2... 3... 4**

**Inhale... 2... 3... 4**

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