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Health

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FOR MEN AND WOMEN

**LEARN TO
BREATHE**

(YES, YOU READ THAT
CORRECTLY—YOU COULD
BE BREATHING WRONG!)

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FACTS
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Just. Breathe.

Does time seem to speed by? Do you have too much to do? Are you stressed? If so, learn to “breathe easy”

For many people, life seems to be moving faster and faster and there never seems to be enough time to get it all done. Stress seems to increase as time decreases, and brings its friends fear, doubt and worry to the party, too. Soon the mind is racing and it shows no signs of slowing down. This is the reality for many people today, which makes it the perfect time to learn to breathe easy.

Breathing easy is quite opposite of what your first reaction normally is, but it is the first thing I ask all my clients to do. At first, I get snarls and grunts much like my little Shih Tzu does when I won't let him on the couch. But once I explain that the way you breathe is one of the very things that causes more stress, their faces change and they become curious as to how this could be (don't worry, I'll tell you!).

The breath is something that is automatic. You don't think of it, it just happens and you completely accept it and pay no attention to it. Have you ever thought about how you were breathing? For most people, the breath is short and labored. Take a moment and without trying to change your breath, just observe it. Yes, even your breath is stressed, along with the rest of your body.

Now the mental body (the mind) is always checking the state of the physical body. One of the key functions the mental body checks is the breath. When the breath is labored (short, tight, restricted) or even being held, it is a sign that the body is in a distressed state.

What happens next? Chaos in the mind and body. The mind sends a red alert signal and more chemicals fire in the brain on top of what is already

there—compounding the problem. The body reacts by tightening up (causing an even greater tension), while circulation gets reduced from the extremities of your body.

Also, all the senses of the body become reduced, which is why you are not as aware as you “used to be.”

This process repeats over and over and soon the normal releases you once found comfort in, such as exercising or writing, are not enough to relieve the stress.

**Yes,
even your
breath is
stressed.**

What is the solution? Change your breath and you will change your life! But in order to do that the breath has to mean something to you. It must be more than just an automatic process. You have to breathe deliberately—and I have developed a system that helps you do just that.

My four-step process to breathing starts with only a five-minute commitment every day of foundation breathing. The rest of the process can be incorporated into your daily routine, without taking any additional time out of your day. What a great deal, right? A five-minute investment every day in foundation breathing truly will change how you live.

By this point I am sure you are asking, "What is foundation breathing?" Foundation breathing is a simple process of breathing in through the nose, then holding your breath, then breathing out through your mouth. It is important to do this in equal parts. For example, if you breathe in through your nose for six seconds then you will want to hold and breathe out for the same amount of time. This is very important to the process. It sounds easy, but many of my clients find it hard to do at first.

At a minimum you should breathe in, hold, and breathe out for five seconds each (15 seconds total). As you get better at breathing, the amount of time will increase. An optimal breath is a 10-second breath for each part (30 seconds total).

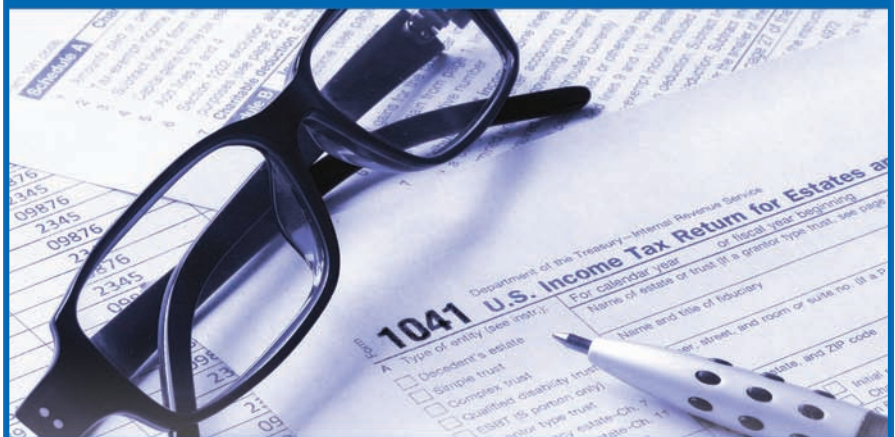
While you do this think only of the breath, and as you automatically relax more and more it will become associated with relaxation. You only have to do the foundation breathing in the privacy of your own home in a quiet space. When you are out in public you will be able to use the

other three parts of my breathing system: preparation/intention breath, performance breath, and recovery breath. The rest of the breaths are simple, long, slow breaths that focus on different meanings, and as a result create different reactions in the body.

Being aware of how you breathe is one of the simple ways to help get control of your life. So relax, breathe easy and enjoy the benefits—like improved workouts, mental clarity, better sleep, balanced emotions, reduced stress and overall better health.

Al Fuentes is with Mental Champ Coaching, www.mentalchamp.com.

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