



# *Work Smart Live Smart*

## **Deep Breathing Simple But Effective**

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Preventing illness, slowing down the aging process and living life to the fullest - these are a few of the reasons Canadians are reaching out towards a healthier lifestyle. One of the simplest and most effective strategies is deep breathing. Though it comes naturally it doesn't mean that we do it correctly.

If you have watched babies and children when sitting or resting you will see that they breathe with their whole lungs. Most adults use around 1/3 of their lung capacity when breathing. Poor posture and chronic tension override our natural, deep rhythm. Our bodies strain for every ounce of oxygen that is taken in. Air is the primary 'food' of our body and without it we would die in as little as 10 minutes. Not breathing correctly adds stress and strain to our bodies.

Our natural stress response promotes breathing rapidly as the body gets excited and ready for action. Deep breathing can interrupt this stress response and promote relaxation. Deep breathing improves the distribution of oxygen to the body's tissues and brain. It can lower blood pressure, reduce muscle tension, bring your mind into focus and quiet the racing thoughts we tend to have and calm your mood by releasing endorphins which are the body's natural painkillers. Deep breathing is a powerful means of recharging yourself. It can convert fatigue into energy and restlessness into calmness.

The 'Complete Breath' can be used to become emotionally calm yet physically energized. You can take in approximately ten times more air than in normal unconscious breathing. The following are steps for the 'Complete Breath':

- Lie or sit in a comfortable position
- Place your hands, one above and one below your belly button, to help experience the filling and releasing of your entire lung capacity
- Breathe in through your nose
- Breathe in three parts by filling the bottom of your lungs (expand your lower stomach), then the middle, and then the top of your lungs
- Hold for a count of three
- Breathe out in three parts by releasing the top, then the middle and finally the bottom
- Your shoulders should roll slightly forward as you force all of the air from your lungs
- Repeat this process several times a day for 5-10 breaths
- Should you start to feel light-headed from the increase in oxygen to your system, shake your arms and hands vigorously to use up the extra oxygen

Deep breathing several times a day helps to expand your lungs and increase your unconscious natural capacity during the rest of the day. It can provide energy when we experience the afternoon lull or during those sometimes dreaded meetings. It can serve as a break from the increase of stress during our day and help us to get refocused when faced with a difficult situation or project. It can also be used during an emergency to increase our capacity for problem solving and decrease the effects of the stress response such as muscle tension, headaches and increased heart rate.

Though deep breathing seems to be an incredibly simple suggestion, it can have very powerful effects. It can be done by anyone, anywhere and in any circumstance. Try it today and notice the effect it has on you. Once started, it will soon become one of the best stress busters in your arsenal.

Stress and wellness specialist, **Beverly Beuermann-King** translates current research and best practices information into a realistic, accessible and practical approach through her dynamic stress and wellness workshops, on-line articles, e-newsletters and media interviews and through a collaboration called *Awakening The Workplace*. Visit [www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com](http://www.WorkSmartLiveSmart.com) for more on Beverly and her wellness work.

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