

Meditation: Be Kind to Your Mind



Meditation is one of those words that conjures up a variety of images – from saffron clad monks to sage-wreathed hippies dripping in crystal jewelry. But did you know that some of the most successful CEOs and entrepreneurs practice meditation at work? [Everyday Health](#) cites big names like Oprah Winfrey, Arianna Huffington, and Sir Paul McCartney as among those who meditate to clear the mind and boost productivity.

Meditation may seem a bit woo-woo, but it has foundations in science. According to [Psychology Today](#), "...research has shown that meditation does not merely make one feel better or less stressed. There are physical benefits that appear to be backed up by clinical evidence. According to these studies, meditation can help individuals sleep better, cope with some symptoms associated with mental disorders like depression and anxiety, reduce some of the psychological difficulties associated with chronic pain, and even improve some cognitive and behavioral functions."

In our stress-filled, busy lives one of the last things we do is take time for ourselves. Meditation is a simple way to give yourself a quick break at any time. In just three minutes, you can calm and center yourself, shed anxiety, and refocus your energy to conquer the rest of your day.

There are many helpful videos, podcasts, books, and other resources that can set you on the path toward whatever meditation practice best suits you. For now, we'll walk you through a very simple 90 second meditation called "*The 4x4 Breathing Technique*," also known as "The Square."

The 4x4 Breathing Technique

Step 1:

Sit comfortably, hands relaxed on your lap. Uncross your legs/ankles and set your feet on the floor. If needed, prop up your back with a small pillow (or wadded up sweater, whatever you have) so that you're at ease.

Step 2:

Close your eyes. Inhale deeply through your nose and out through your mouth. Do this for a few breaths until your breathing is even. Now, we'll begin breathing in counts of four.

Breathe in... two, three, four.

Hold... two, three, four.

Breathe out... two, three, four.

Hold... two three, four.

<repeat>



Do this between four and eight times or until you feel yourself settle into a relaxed state. You can keep doing the 4x4 for the rest of the three minutes or move on to step 3, whatever feels natural in the moment.

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Step 3:

Breathe normally. Imagine a white sheet of paper. Keep thinking about it. Thoughts and feelings are going to intrude. That's okay. Acknowledge them and then let them go. When you feel your mind wander, return to the paper. Keep breathing.

When you've concentrated on your paper for about a minute you can take a few more deep breaths and open your eyes.

Some people find it helpful to imagine a shape like a blue sphere or a green diamond instead of a blank paper. Whatever feels right to you is fine. The point is to give your mind something easy and simple to think about instead of your everyday cares and concerns. As you practice, you'll get better and better at staying focused. What's most important is letting your brain rest while you're awake.

How do you feel? More awake? Refreshed? Ready for a nap? Whatever it is you feel, it's okay. You've just given yourself a gift. Three minutes of mindful meditation a day can help you regain focus, ease anxiety, and even make you more productive.

Taking care of yourself is essential. **Keep being kind – especially to your mind!**