

## Everyday Breathing

Abdominal, or diaphragmatic (or belly) breathing is the single most effective strategy for stress reduction. Try to make your normal pattern of breathing abdominal, i.e. when you breathe in, the abdomen rises and when you breathe out, the abdomen falls. Take note of your breathing at various times during the day, and try to bring your breathing back to abdominal breathing if you notice it has become shallow (i.e. breathing from the chest). With practice abdominal breathing will become your normal breathing pattern and will assist you in feeling more calm and relaxed.

**For continuing anxiety and stress issues, consult a professional counsellor.**

*“I am open to receive  
With every breath I breathe.”  
Michael Sun*

*“Tension is who you think you should be.  
Relaxation is who you are.”  
Chinese Proverb*

### **Margaret Lambert, Psychologist, Author**

Dip.T, B.Ed, Grad.Dip.Arts, Grad.Dip.Psych, B.Beh.Sc.(Hons), CMACA ACEP

**CONNECT**  
Counselling Services

445 Trower Road, Brinkin NT 0810  
Ph: 8945 9588; 0414 459585  
email: [marg@margaretlambert.com](mailto:marg@margaretlambert.com)  
<http://margaretlambert.com>

**CONNECT**  
Counselling Services

*Specialising in the treatment of  
anxiety, stress, trauma and pain*

Breathing and Relaxation

## ***Instructions for Deep Breathing***

Deep breathing technique is best practised each day for the promotion of good health and general wellbeing. Deep breathing technique reduces anxiety and stress levels. Using proper breathing techniques is one of the most beneficial things that can be done for both short and long term physical and emotional health.

**CONNECT**  
Counselling Services

445 Trower Road, Brinkin NT 0810  
Ph: 8945 9588; 0414 459585  
email: [marg@margaretlambert.com](mailto:marg@margaretlambert.com)  
<http://margaretlambert.com>

## Breathing and Relaxation

Most of us use shallow breathing and use only around 20 percent of our lung capacity. Shallow breathing reduces energy levels and vitality and also reduces our resistance to disease. Your body functions better when all its cells are receiving a good supply of oxygen and this is achieved through deep breathing. Regular deep breathing slows the heart rate and improves your cells' oxygen levels which can bring dramatic changes in your general health, both physically and emotionally. As you master a deeper breathing pattern, you will notice that your stress level diminishes and your body is more able to relax.

When you start this breathing technique, you may not be able to make your breaths very long. Don't worry – just count faster! As you become more practised at it, you will be able to count slower, with your breaths becoming longer. Alternatively, you can change the 4-7-8 breath count, keeping it in the same ratio, i.e. exhaling for twice as long as you inhale.

Do this exercise each morning and evening and notice how your stress level starts to reduce. You may also notice after a while that your normal breathing pattern is belly (deeper) breathing rather than chest (shallow) breathing and that you have more energy.

Once you feel comfortable with the technique, you can use words to enhance your relaxation. For example, when you inhale, say the word, *relaxation* and when you exhale, say the word *stress* or *anger*. This will help to attract the feeling/emotion you wish to take into your body and to release those that you wish to expel.

## Breathing Exercise: The 4-7-8 Breathing Technique

This technique is called 4-7-8 because it refers to the number of counts that you inhale (4 counts), hold the breath (7 counts), and exhale (8 counts). It should be performed twice a day or whenever you feel your anxiety build up.

1. Sit with your back straight or lie down. Notice what your breathing pattern is like and how you feel before commencing the 4-7-8 breathing technique.
2. Place the tip of your tongue on the roof of your mouth just behind the teeth. Place your hands on your abdomen just below the naval.
3. Inhale through your nose and breathe into your abdomen for the count of 4. Feel your abdomen rise when you inhale. Hold the breath for the count of 7 or as close to 7 as you can manage comfortably.
4. Exhale through your mouth, for the count of 8. As you exhale feel your abdomen fall. Imagine your body going loose and limp. As you exhale, gently contract your abdominal muscles to expel remaining air from the lungs.
5. Repeat 3 – 7 times, whatever you can manage. Notice how your breathing pattern has changed and how you feel now. Aim to achieve a rate of one complete breath (inhaling, holding the breath and exhaling) every 10 seconds or 6 breaths per minute. With practice you will achieve this.

**IMPORTANT:** If you become light-headed whilst doing this technique, try not to breathe so deeply. As you become comfortable with your level of breathing you will gradually be able to work up to deeper breathing.