



Box Breathing is simple, and it works. The most important thing is to start. Try training it for a few minutes per day. If six seconds is too much of a challenge, start with four and work your way up. No pressure. Just breathe!

HOW TO PRACTICE BOX BREATHING

1. Inhale deeply, fully inflating the lungs and allowing the belly to expand outward, for a count of 6.
2. Hold your breath for a count of 6.
3. Exhale fully, allowing the belly to return to normal, for a count of 6.
4. Hold for a count of 6.
5. Repeat

THAT'S IT!

You can vary this in a few different ways. You can make the practice into a sort of mantra meditation by saying a mantra rather than counting. A few I have used over the years:

"Everything about me says you are going to be ok."

"Posture, Soften."

"Aid. Release."

Another variation is to visualize four sides of a box changing to a new color, one after the other, or in a line as though the box is being traced by a colored pen you hold with your mind, making this into a visualization exercise. Practicing for five minutes can provide a quick break from stress, but if you practice for longer—10 to 20 minutes, for example—it can fall under the umbrella of meditation, which carries even more lasting benefits.

DEEP BREATHING APPS TO TRY

Box Breathing App: This one has nine levels of use that can help you to really get a firm grasp on the practice of box breathing and make it part of your daily routine. The app includes full and partial audio prompts, and tracks your practice history so you can see how much time you're spending with this stress relief activity.

Breathe 2 Relax: This app has a wide range of timed breathing exercises to use. It was developed by the National Institute for Telehealth and Technology, an organization within the U.S. Department of Defense. One of its strong points is that it has a graphic feature that can help you to determine where much of your stress originates.

Universal Breathing: This has a variety of visual exercises that work with your breathing. They become increasingly challenging, helping you to gain more complex skills with your breathing exercises. This can be particularly enjoyable for those who love a challenge and may become bored with an app that may feel repetitive, but want the benefits of practicing calming techniques like breathing exercises.