

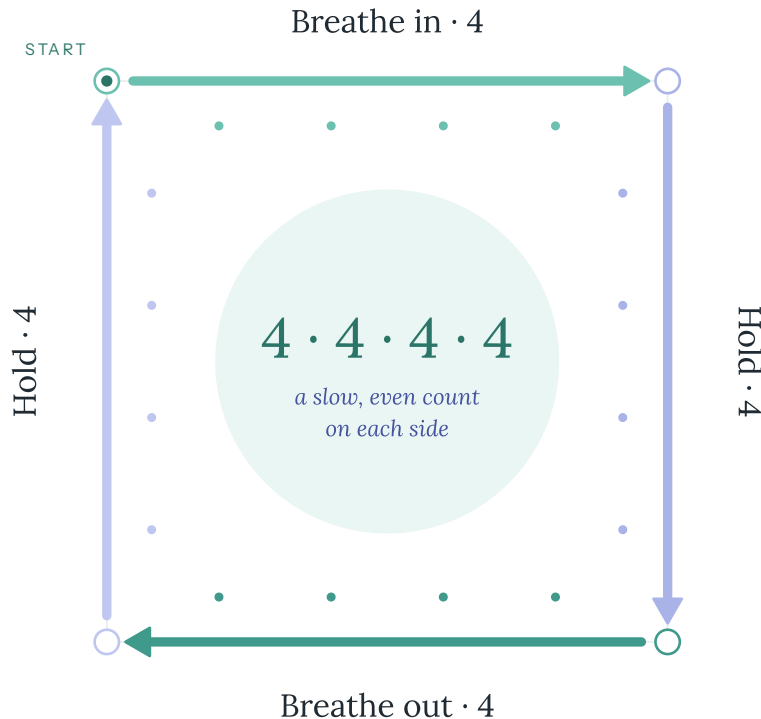
# Box Breathing

BREATHING PRACTICE · PACED BREATHING WITH EQUAL COUNTS

*A steady, four-part rhythm you can come back to during busy or stressful moments*

Box breathing is a simple way of pacing the breath: breathing in, pausing, breathing out and pausing again, each for the same short count. Some people find that a clear, predictable rhythm helps them feel a little steadier, though it may feel different from day to day.

## 01 The four sides of the box



*trace the square as you breathe*

## 02 How to practise

1

### Breathe in for 4

Sitting or standing comfortably, breathe in gently, through your nose if you can, counting slowly to four.

2

### Pause for 4

Rest at the top of the breath. Keep the pause soft, without clamping or straining.

3

### Breathe out for 4

Let the breath out steadily, through your nose or softly through your mouth.

4

### Pause for 4, then begin again

Repeat for four to six rounds, then let your breathing return to its own pace.

## 03 Making it fit you

*there is no single right way*

### Adjust the count

If four feels too long, try a count of three, or even two. A comfortable rhythm matters more than a particular number.

### Soften or skip the pauses

The pauses can be light and brief. If holding the breath feels uncomfortable, you can leave them out and simply breathe in and out evenly.

### Pause if it doesn't feel right

If you feel light-headed, dizzy, tingly or short of breath, stop and let your breathing settle naturally before deciding whether to continue.



If you have a heart or lung condition, are pregnant, or are unsure whether breath-holding suits you, consider checking with your GP or another health professional first.

### What the research suggests

#### EVIDENCE NOTE

Evidence for paced breathing is promising but still developing. Breathwork has been linked with modestly lower self-reported stress, though many trials carry some risk of bias (Fincham et al., 2023). Slow breathing has been associated with changes such as higher heart rate variability in small studies (Zaccaro et al., 2018), and box breathing was among several practices linked with improved mood in a month-long trial (Balban et al., 2023). It is best seen as a practical coping skill, not a treatment in itself.

# Box Breathing

PRACTICE LOG · PACED BREATHING WITH EQUAL COUNTS

*Noticing how the practice fits into your week*

Use this page to record when you practise and what you notice. There is no right or wrong result; the aim is to learn what suits you.

## 04 My practice log tension or unease, 0 = none, 10 = most

| Date | When or where<br>e.g. before a meeting | Rounds<br>or minutes | Before<br>0–10 | After<br>0–10 | What I noticed<br>in my body, thoughts or feelings |
|------|----------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------------------------------------------|
|      |                                        |                      | ____ /10       | ____ /10      |                                                    |
|      |                                        |                      | ____ /10       | ____ /10      |                                                    |
|      |                                        |                      | ____ /10       | ____ /10      |                                                    |
|      |                                        |                      | ____ /10       | ____ /10      |                                                    |
|      |                                        |                      | ____ /10       | ____ /10      |                                                    |
|      |                                        |                      | ____ /10       | ____ /10      |                                                    |
|      |                                        |                      | ____ /10       | ____ /10      |                                                    |

## 05 Looking back on the week

What seemed to help, and what got in the way?

To bring to my next session

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### Go at your own pace

Focusing on the breath can sometimes bring up anxiety or uncomfortable sensations. You can pause, stop, return to your natural breathing, or come back to it later. If you become significantly distressed, consider speaking with your psychologist or another appropriate professional.

#### SOURCES

Balban, M. Y., Neri, E., Kogon, M. M., Weed, L., Nouriani, B., Jo, B., Holl, G., Zeitzer, J. M., Spiegel, D., & Huberman, A. D. (2023). Brief structured respiration practices enhance mood and reduce physiological arousal. *Cell Reports Medicine*, 4(1), Article 100895. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.xcrm.2022.100895>

Fincham, G. W., Strauss, C., Montero-Marin, J., & Cavanagh, K. (2023). Effect of breathwork on stress and mental health: A meta-analysis of randomised-controlled trials. *Scientific Reports*, 13(1), Article 432. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-022-27247-y>

Zaccaro, A., Piarulli, A., Laurino, M., Garbella, E., Menicucci, D., Neri, B., & Gemignani, A. (2018). How breath-control can change your life: A systematic review on psycho-physiological correlates of slow breathing. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 12, Article 353. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2018.00353>