

SOUTHWEST WEST CENTRAL SERVICE COOPERATIVE

**SWWC**

*Education & Administrative Resources*

**Breathe: Summer Break is Near!**

**Rachel Cox Ravery, MSW, BSSW, LGSW**

**Mental Health Consultant**

# Congratulations!



# Objectives

- Benefits of breathing exercises
- Breathing techniques for heart and brain health
- Morning, mid-day and end-of-day brain-healthy routines
- Box Breathing (AKA Square Breathing)
- Breathing exercises for student stress and anxiety
- Questions/Comments

# Benefits

- Reduce stress levels in your body
- Lower your heart rate
- Lower your blood pressure
- Improve diabetic symptoms
- Reduce depression
- Better manage chronic pain
- Better regulate your body's reaction to stress and fatigue
- Reduce the possibility of burnout for caregivers (<https://homecareassistance.com>).

# Heart and Brain Health

Breathing techniques for heart and brain health:

- **“Mindful breathing.** This involves becoming aware of your breath and focusing on it. It does not involve trying to change the way you breathe. However, the act of focusing on the breath usually slows down breathing patterns, making you feel more relaxed. As you focus on how air moves in and out through your lungs, mouth and nose, it becomes a form of calming meditation.
- **Mantra breathing.** This technique makes use of a mantra to help focus on your breath. A mantra is a phrase or word that you repeat to yourself to create focus. As you repeat it, you become able to relax and meditate” (<https://homecareassistance.com>).

# Heart and Brain Health

- **“Square breathing.** This employs visualization to create focus. As you inhale, visualize one side of a square. Then, visualize the next side of the square as you exhale. Repeat the process until you have imagined each side of a square.
- **Nostril breathing.** This technique can help to reduce agitation and anxiety. As you breathe you close off one nostril and take air in slowly through the other. Then switch, closing off the second nostril while breathing through the first. Repeat the process until you begin to feel calmer” (<https://homecareassistance.com>).

# Heart and Brain Health

- **Pranayama breathing.** This cleansing breath method is used in the practice of yoga. Experts say that using pranayama has the power to clean 72,000 channels in the body. It involves inhaling with the mouth closed, then exhaling through the nose. This type of breathing technique can clean blood and clear your respiratory system. As a result, good clean oxygen travels to the heart and the brain.
- **4,7,8 Method.** Developed by Dr. Andrew Weil, this breathing method helps you get to sleep. It is a simple and straight forward method. You inhale to the count of four, hold your breath to the count of seven, and then exhale to the count of eight. Repeat as needed” (<https://homecareassistance.com>).

# Heart and Brain Health

- **Belly breath.** This type of breathing is easy to practice because you can feel your body taking in and exhaling air by the movement of your abdomen. Lie down on a bed or on the floor. Place one hand on your stomach and inhale slowly through the nose (notice the abdomen rising). As you exhale, you contract the abdomen muscles and push the air out of your lungs”  
(<https://homecareassistance.com>).



# Morning Routine

**“Start your day with morning breathing.** This is a great exercise to relieve stiff muscles and clear your respiratory tract when you get up in the morning:

- Stand up and bend forward from the waist. Keep the knees slightly bent. Let your arms dangle loosely to the floor.
- Inhale slowly and deeply.
- Roll your body up slowly, lifting your abdomen, chest, and shoulders before your head. Do not stand up quickly with your head first.
- Once you are in a full standing position, hold your breath.
- As you begin to bend forward again, exhale slowly. Repeat this several times to loosen your body” (<https://homecareassistance.com>).

# Mid-Day Routine

**“Renew your energy midday with the stimulating breathing technique.** This exercise is used in yoga. It can increase your energy and help you to feel more alert.

- Keep your mouth closed, then inhale and exhale rapidly through your nose. Keep your breaths as short as possible. Don't worry if you make a lot of noise.
- Try to breath in and out in rapid succession three times in one second. This makes the diaphragm work hard. After each set of three, breathe normally.
- Be careful and do this exercise for only 15 seconds when you first begin. With practice, slowly increase the duration of the exercise by five seconds each time” (<https://homecareassistance.com>).

# End-of-Day Routine

**“Relax at the end of the day with the 4-7-8 breathing exercise.** This exercise is intended to relax and calm your body and mind.

- Sit with your back straight.
- Move the tip of your tongue behind your upper front teeth.
- Exhale completely through your mouth, leaving your tongue behind your teeth.
- As you count to four, close your mouth and then inhale softly. Then hold your breath while you count to seven.
- Exhale through your mouth counting to eight.
- These steps comprise one breath of 4-7-8.
- Start over again by inhaling.
- Repeat the steps three more times” (<https://homecareassistance.com>).

# Box Breathing

## What is box breathing?

- “Box breathing, also known as square breathing, is a technique used when taking slow, deep breaths. It can heighten performance and concentration while also being a powerful stress reliever. It’s also called four-square breathing.
- This technique can be beneficial to anyone, especially those who want to meditate or reduce stress. It’s used by everyone from athletes to U.S. Navy SEALs, police officers, and nurses.
- You may find it particularly helpful if you have a lung disease such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)” (<https://healthline.com>).

# Box Breathing: Benefits

“According to the Mayo Clinic, there’s sufficient evidence that intentional deep breathing can actually calm and regulate the autonomic nervous system (ANS).

- This system regulates involuntary body functions such as temperature. It can lower blood pressure and provide an almost immediate sense of calm.
- The slow holding of breath allows CO<sub>2</sub> to build up in the blood. An increased blood CO<sub>2</sub> enhances the cardio-inhibitory response of the vagus nerve when you exhale and stimulates your parasympathetic system. This produces a calm and relaxed feeling in the mind and body.
- Box breathing can reduce stress and improve your mood. That makes it an exceptional treatment for conditions such as generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and depression.
- It can also help treat insomnia by allowing you to calm your nervous system at night before bed. Box breathing can even be efficient at helping with pain management” (<https://healthline.com>).

# Box Breathing: Tips for Beginners

- “If you’re new to box breathing, it may be difficult to get the hang of it. You may get dizzy after a few rounds. This is normal. As you practice it more often, you’ll be able to go longer without the dizziness. If you get dizzy, stay sitting for a minute and resume normal breathing.
- To help you focus on your breathing, find a quiet, dimly lit environment to practice box breathing. This isn’t at all necessary to perform the technique, but it can help you focus on the practice if you’re new to it.
- Ideally, you’ll want to repeat the box breathing cycle four times in one sitting.
- Do box breathing several times a day as needed to calm your nerves and relieve stress” (<https://healthline.com>).

# Box Breathing

## “Getting started with box breathing

- Before you get started, make sure that you’re seated upright in a comfortable chair with your feet flat on the floor. Try to be in a stress-free, quiet environment where you can focus on your breathing.
- Keeping your hands relaxed in your lap with your palms facing up, focus on your posture. You should be sitting up straight. This will help you take deep breaths” (<https://healthline.com>).

# Box Breathing

## “Step 1: Slowly exhale

- Sitting upright, slowly exhale through your mouth, getting all the oxygen out of your lungs. Focus on this intention and be conscious of what you’re doing.

## Step 2: Slowly inhale

- Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose to the count of four. In this step, count to four very slowly in your head.
- Feel the air fill your lungs, one section at a time, until your lungs are completely full and the air moves into your abdomen”(<https://healthline.com>).



# Box Breathing

## “Step 3: Hold your breath

- Hold your breath for another slow count of four.

## Step 4: Exhale again

- Exhale through your mouth for the same slow count of four, expelling the air from your lungs and abdomen.
- Be conscious of the feeling of the air leaving your lungs” (<https://healthline.com>).

# Box Breathing

## “Step 5: Hold your breath again

- Hold your breath for the same slow count of four before repeating this process” (<https://healthline.com>).

# Student Stress/Anxiety

## ”Tension release:

- Take a deep breath and hold it as you curl your toes for about 5 seconds, then let your breath go all at once. Don't ease off — let go completely!
- Next clench your calves, thighs, buttocks, arms, shoulders, jaws and finally squeeze your eyelids.
- Tense your muscles, one area at a time, and relax everything upon release” (<https://thefriendshipbench.org>).

# Student Stress/Anxiety

## “Deep breathing:

- Take a deep breath using your abdomen, ensure it expand fully.
- Hold it in for about 3 seconds.
- Exhale all at once (it’s a good idea to make a sound or sigh audibly, it helps expend all the air)
- As you exhale, be sure to relax your jaw and shoulders” (<https://thefriendshipbench.org>).

# Student Stress/Anxiety

## “Focused breathing:

- With your eyes closed, shift your attention to the tip of your nose.
- As you inhale deeply, become aware of the air entering your nostrils.
- Exhale but be aware of the sensations of air passing back out through your nostrils.
- Repeat several times” (<https://thefriendshipbench.org>).

# Student Stress/Anxiety

## “8-4-7 breathing

- Exhale (with sound) through your mouth for 8 seconds
- Inhale quietly through your nose for 4 seconds.
- Hold your breath for 7 seconds.
- Repeat for four cycles.
- Recommended that you do this once in the AM and once in the PM regularly” (<https://thefriendshipbench.org>).

# Questions/Comments

- Questions?
- Comments?
- Thank you!

[rachel.coxravery@swwc.org](mailto:rachel.coxravery@swwc.org)

# References

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