

## **STRATEGY #2: THE RELAXATION RESPONSE THROUGH MINDFUL BREATHING**

Modern mind body research at Harvard University and others has shown that there are a number of effective ways to invoke the “relaxation response” which directly counters the effects of acute and chronic stress. Regular practice for as little as 5-10 minutes daily can lead to a sense of well-being, improved mood, lower blood pressure, improved immunity to stress, better sleep, more energy and many other benefits. Not the least of which are the impacts on your telomeres and genes! [59]

The importance of this practice is that the effects actually “carry over” throughout the day, and has been demonstrated to positively influence your health, happiness and higher performance in all areas. Use the downloadable form to monitor your progress over the next 21-30 days.

Here are the steps:

- First, arrange for about 10 minutes of regular quiet time each day (though not after meals).
- Sit (or recline) in a comfortable position.
- Mentally set aside, just for the time being, any worries or concerns.
- Next, engage in a series of slow rhythmic breathing cycles, actively focusing your attention on inhaling and exhaling. Your mind will occasionally drift. When it does, just notice it, and gently refocus on your breathing sensations. Count the number of breath cycles you perform over the 10 minute period. It may approximate 60-100 breaths, depending on the individual.

Keep a watch or a clock nearby. If you become so relaxed you lose track of your count, just “peek” occasionally at the time until about ten or so minutes is up. With practice, the number of your breath cycles *per minute* will significantly *decrease*. This is your desired goal. Many shoot for approximately 6 breaths per minute, or 60 over a course of 10 minutes. How low can *you* go?

Mindful breathing, when practiced daily can have significant physical and mental benefits in as short as 4-8 weeks. It can literally reverse the effects of days, weeks, months and years of daily stress over time. It will “tune up” the pre-frontal cortex of your brain, calm your amygdala and enhance the process of better emotional self-regulation and mental focus.

### **Sabotage Alert !**

You can easily sabotage your resilience by telling yourself you “don’t have the time” to practice these well-validated, scientific tools on a regular basis for 21-30 days. But the average person spends several *hours* a day watching television, playing video games, or surfing the internet. You know who you are!

Surely you can adjust your schedule to allow for a few minutes per day to initiate a habit that will change your life. Don’t settle for less!

# Mindful Breathing Practice Log

Day	Minutes	Comments/ Observations
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