

MODULE 7 ACTIVITY

Paced Breathing: Box Breathing

Paced breathing is slow, deep, breathing into your belly. With normal breathing, you take about 12 to 14 breaths a minute. By comparison, with paced breathing, you take only five to seven breaths a minute. That translates to one breath every 10-12 seconds. With paced breathing, you generally want your exhale to be longer than your inhale. Paced breathing slows the activity in your central nervous system and decreases your emotional reactivity by triggering a relaxation response.

Part 1: Box Breathing

There are many ways to do paced breathing as long as the general principle of slowing down your breath and finding space between each inhale and exhale is upheld. Here is a video from a licensed therapist that explains why regular practice of paced breathing is beneficial. It also demonstrates the box/square breathing strategy.

Box breathing slows the breath down to about three and a half breaths per minute. And, it divides the inhale/exhale cycle into four even segments.

[Use this video to practice this foundational strategy.](#)

Part 2: Expanding to Other Practices (4-7-8)

Now that you have practiced box breathing, try to incorporate it into your daily life. You can change up the technique to get closer to the ideal of a rapid inhale and longer exhale. You might, for example, try breathing in for two seconds and get a full breath before holding then exhaling for four seconds each.

Or, you can try the 4-7-8 method:

- **Breathe in for 4 seconds.**
- **Hold your breath for 7 seconds.**
- **Exhale making a “whoosh” sound for 8 seconds.**
- **Pause and repeat 4x.**

Why practice this change? Because in moments of stress, we might notice first that our breathing is more rapid and shallow. And this practice helps slow down and deepen our breath.