

Time to breathe

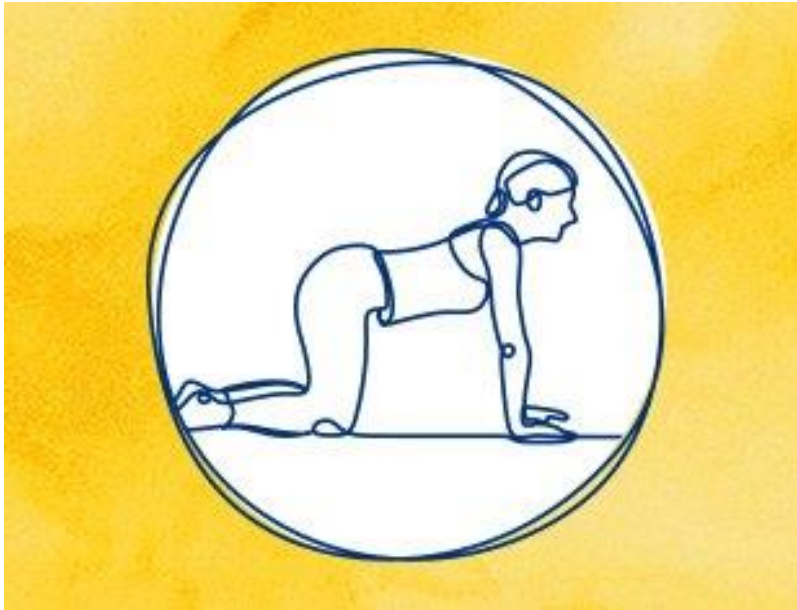
While we all breathe without taking too much notice, being mindful with our breathing has many benefits. If we're feeling anxious or stressed, focusing on regular, even breaths can help bring us back to a sense of calm. Here's how to get started:

Sit upright with your shoulders back and close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose as you count to four. Hold while you count to two, then breathe out through your mouth as you count to four. Repeat and try to make it a steady, flowing rhythm. Notice your lungs filling up, your ribs stretching, then your body relaxing.

Practice this mindful breathing technique at least once a day to help you feel calmer and more focused.



Stretch to soothe



Back support

This morning stretch, also called 'cat-cow', can help loosen your lower back:

- Start on your hands and knees in a tabletop position.
- Breathe in, curl your back up, pull your abdomen in and tuck in your chin.
- Breathe out, release your back, lift your head and feel your hips stretch up.



Elbow release

This exercise is great for releasing tension at the end of the day:

- While seated, hold your elbows in your hands above your head.
- Stretch to the left, lengthening your torso, and hold for a few seconds.

- Then stretch to the right and hold for a few seconds.



Shoulder stretch

This is another exercise you can try seated, to feel an all-over release across your shoulder:

- Place your left hand above the elbow of your right arm, and gently pull your right arm across your body.
- Make sure your right shoulder is dropped and not hunched by your ear.
- Hold the stretch for 30 seconds while breathing slowly and evenly.
- Release and repeat on the other side.



Evening uplift

If you've been sitting for a long period, this stretch helps get more oxygen into you:

- Find a belt or scarf and stand with your feet hip-width apart.
- Hold the belt wide and taut in your hands, and stretch it over your head.
- Keeping your arms straight, bring them over your head and behind you.
- Bring your arms back to the front and down, then repeat five times.