



A Simple Way to De-stress

My cousin taught me how to breathe properly when she came to visit a couple of months ago. This technique is so simple. Try it and see how it helps you de-stress and re-energize.

To breathe properly, you want to breathe deeply and completely. Your abdomen should protrude when you inhale. When you exhale, your abdomen should flatten. When you breathe in, breathe until your lungs are full, and when you exhale, it should be until all the air is expelled.

This is just the opposite of how many of us breathe. We usually suck in our stomachs and puff up our chests when we inhale. But watch a baby or a child. You will notice that they naturally breathe correctly! The other night, I put my hand on my children's respective tummies while they were sleeping, and oh, how deeply they were breathing! Their abdomens rose with each intake of air and flattened each time air was expelled. Lovely.

So how does proper and deep breathing help you to de-stress? Through proper breathing, you oxygenate your body and help it to detoxify better. It also boosts the immune system. When you don't breathe properly, the converse happens and the lack of oxygen also clouds

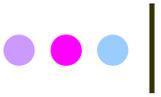


your head. No wonder we feel spaced-out and foggy when we are under stress! Of course if you feel foggy all the time, then you are probably a victim of chronic low-grade stress.

Okay, so what do you do when you feel like popping more chocolate chips (like I'm wont to do when I'm stressed) or worse still, when you know you are going to lose your cool (again!) and Christian witness any moment now (to the perplexity of your children)?

Go find a place to lie down. It's nicer if the room is darkened. Tell your kiddos to let mama be alone for a little while (train them to allow you to get away for a while when you have to!).

Lie down on somewhere comfortable. Place your palms on your lower abdomen. Close your eyes. Now take a deep breath through your nose. As you inhale, count four. You should feel your hands move outward. Hold for four counts. Then exhale through your mouth. As you exhale, count six. Then hold for four counts. Breathe in and out correctly (remember 4-4-6-4) at least 10 times. If you can have some soothing music (my favorite is Pachelbel's Canon in D), play it softly in the background.



That's it!

When you rise from your bed or sofa, you will feel calmer as more oxygen circulates throughout your body.

Then fall on your knees and pray, pray, pray. Ask the Lord to grant you strength, and return to what you need to do. And as you walk out of the room, **SMILE.**

A little note:

I've found that these days, I can use this technique when I'm by the sink, when I'm driving or when I'm at the computer. I consciously breathe deeply before I go to bed and when I rise. It really does help relax me when I need to calm down, and it refreshes me when I feel slightly wilted.

Another note:

If you are not at home and have no where to lie down, stand up with your feet shoulder width apart. Place your palms on your lower abdomen. Now close your eyes and slowly inhale through your nose. If you are breathing correctly, you will feel your hands move outward. Hold for a count of four, then exhale slowly through your mouth and hold for another count of four. Do this 10 times.