

## Relax More Challenge

### What?

The April challenge aims to reduce stress and increase wellbeing. You will learn a deep-breathing exercise for calming and stress relief that can be used anywhere. You will also learn how to use a breathing exercise to increase alertness during those times you feel tired or drowsy.

### How?

Each day during the month, find a few seconds of spare time to practice one of these deep-breathing exercises. Do this at your desk, at home before bed, or any place you feel is best. Aim to complete the exercise at least twice a day, and increase the number as you wish. See the guides below and choose the methods that work for you.

4-7-8 breathing: This exercise is simple, fast and great for quick stress relief.

1. Exhale through your mouth making a “whoosh” sound.
2. Close your mouth and inhale through your nose for four seconds.
3. Hold your breath for seven seconds.
4. For eight seconds, exhale through your mouth making a “whoosh” sound.
5. That is one breath. Do this four times.

Relaxation response: For this exercise, find a quiet place free from too much noise or distractions.

1. Sit or lie down.
2. Close your eyes.
3. Choose a word, phrase or sound to repeat in your mind, not out loud (e.g., “peace”).
4. Try to ignore all other thoughts and noises.
5. Relax your muscles from your feet to your face, consciously feeling relaxation sweep over you.
6. Breathe deeply, inhaling through your nose and exhaling through your mouth.

The stimulating breath: This breathing exercise helps to make you more alert. When you are feeling tired or drowsy, try the stimulating breath.

1. Inhale and exhale quickly through your nose. Keep your mouth closed and relaxed. Breathe in as long as you breathe out. Make them short and fast.
2. Aim for three breaths in and three breaths out per second.
3. Start with 10 seconds total and return to normal breathing. You can increase by 5 seconds as you feel comfortable. Do not exceed 30 seconds.

### Why?

Stress management is an important part of your health. By finding ways to decrease stress, you can increase your energy, sleep better, and even lower blood pressure. Simple breathing exercises have been shown to relieve stress and increase productivity, as well as your mood. Whenever you need a boost or feel stressed, make sure to breathe!