MINI BREATHING EXERCISES

These focused breathing exercises use the breath to reduce anxiety, tension and stress immediately. You can do them with your eyes open or closed — anytime or anyplace.

Good times for a mini
While stuck in traffic... when put on hold during a phone call... in your doctor’s waiting room... when someone says something that bothers you... at a red light... waiting for a phone call... in the dentist’s chair... when you’re overwhelmed with what you need to accomplish... in line... when you’re in pain... while waiting for or in an elevator... right before a big exam... any time you’re feeling stressed!

How to do a mini
Switch to diaphragmatic breathing: Breath deeply through your nose, and exhale through your mouth. With each breath in, allow your belly to expand, with each breath out, allow your belly to be soft again. If this is difficult, just try to breath more slowly, focusing on the exhale. Soften your stomach muscles and let your belly be loose. This will help you breath more easily. Use this breath for the four mini breathing exercises listed below.

Mini #1: Countdown
Count down slowly from 10 to zero. With each number, take one complete breath, inhaling and exhaling. For example, breathe in deeply saying “10” to yourself. Breathe out slowly. On your next breath, say “nine,” and so on. If you feel lightheaded, count down more slowly to space your breaths further apart. When you reach zero, you should feel more relaxed. If not, go through the exercise again.

Mini #2: Take 4
As you inhale, count up very slowly to four. As you exhale, count slowly back down to one. Repeat this several times.

Mini #3: The Pause
Breathe slowly in and out. Pause for a few seconds after you inhale. Pause again after you exhale. Do this for several breaths.

Mini #4: Diaphragmatic breathing practice
Lie on your stomach with your legs a comfortable distance apart. Fold your arms in front of your body so that your hands rest on opposite elbows. Rest your forehead on your forearms. Study the sensations of breathing with your diaphragm. Notice the rhythm of your breath and how your belly expands when you inhale and contracts when you exhale.