WFH | Between Zoom meetings? Take a breath awareness break

Arizona Alumni Association
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In times of uncertainty, we can turn to our breath to soothe us and provide a grounding force in our lives—maybe even becoming a dear friend.

As we adapt to working from home and our changing environments, it is natural to experience mental and emotional anxieties. Our bodies may register these stressors as a threat and begin to operate in "flight or fight" mode, resulting in restricted breathing and a tightening in our bodies.

You may have noticed feeling exhausted after Zoom meetings, for example. Do you find yourself rubbing the side of your neck? Or maybe you feel exasperated when the dog or a child runs through the background right when you try to make an important point? We can all laugh at the funny Zoom moments, but they also may cause us to stiffen and exercise shallow breathing without even knowing it.

Taking a breath awareness break between your Zoom meetings can help.

When we become aware of our breath and engage in conscious breathing, the breath becomes smoother and expands and the nervous system will rebalance itself. This way, the body and mind can become calm, relaxed and release tension. We might even find ourselves yawning! Better yet, oxygen will increase in the body to energize our whole system. The body has miraculous ways of taking care of itself, but it needs us to be its friend.

Consider lying down between Zoom calls and engaging in breath awareness. It has helped me get into calm space after technology difficulties or communication interruptions and it changes up my body position after sitting for an extended time. It has worked wonders for changing my perspective and reframing my outlook for the rest of the day.

Breath Awareness Exercise

- Place a rug, towel or yoga mat on the floor and place a pillow at one end.
- Lie down on the floor, placing your head on the pillow, and bend your knees, keeping your feet about a foot apart (or hip distance apart).
- Rest your hands on your lower belly.
- Close your eyes and allow your whole body to release and soften, becoming more and more comfortable. Adjust your body as needed.
- Become aware of your breath without trying to improve it. Inhale and exhale from your nose (if your nostrils are not clear, breathe gently through your mouth).
- Listen to your breath and notice the rhythm of your breathing. Allow the breath to become smooth and to naturally soften.
- Allow the body to continue to soften.
As you practice, the mind's attention is on the body and the breath.
Try to do the practice without feelings or thoughts.
As thoughts enter the mind, notice those thoughts and let them go, bringing your attention back to the body and breath.
Practice for five to 15 minutes.

Sarah Beaudry, a certified yoga teacher and yoga therapist, oversees marketing and communications at the Arizona Alumni Association. She is offering yoga breathing and gentle movement classes on Zoom. Classes are 20 minutes in length and include morning, lunchtime and evening offerings. For more information, email sbeaudry@al.arizona.edu.

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