

Deep Breathing Exercises for Leaders

In the rush and stress of your busy day, being able to stop, take some deep breaths, and re-center is important for any Coach Leader. Deep breathing exercises support leaders in tough times, situations, and conversations, where stress and anxiety try to rush in.

Across the medical industry, there is much information on the benefits of deep breathing exercises (Be Well at Work, n.d.; Perciavalle et al., 2017). Most important to leaders is the need to lower blood pressure and reduce stress and anxiety. Thus, self-care for Coach Leaders requires time for deep breathing exercises! Here are two exercises for Coach Leaders.

BREATHING BREAKS

Several times a day, take breathing breaks to help refresh your energy, let go of distractions, and increase focus.

1. Stand and take a deep breath while raising your arms slowly over your head.
2. Exhale as you lower your arms.
3. Repeat three times.

PACED BREATHING

Paced breathing is a technique that can help activate stress-reducing mechanisms in the body by promoting a harmonious state between your respiratory system and your heart. Using a breathing app in the beginning can also help serve as a breathing coach. Eventually, the paced breathing will become second nature.

1. Take a normal breath. Deeper breaths will follow.
2. Focus your attention on a specific object, image, or sound or even your breath to free your mind from distractions.
3. Inhale for a count of two to four seconds. Breathe in slowly through your nose, letting your chest and lower belly expand.
4. Exhale for a count of four to six seconds. Breathe out slowly through your mouth, pursing your lips and making a swoosh sound.
5. Repeat as needed. If your mind wanders, gently redirect your focus back to counting and breathing. In our experience, sometimes just taking a deep breath is all we need. Other times, we might need to repeat these steps as many as three to ten times.

REFERENCES

Be Well at Work. (n.d.). *Breathing exercises*. Author. Accessed at https://uhs.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/breathing_exercises_0.pdf on April 24, 2025.

Perciavalle, V., Blandini, M., Fecarotta, P., Buscemi, A., Di Corrado, D., Bertolo, L., et al. (2017). The role of deep breathing on stress. *Neurological Sciences*, 38(3), 451–458. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10072-016-2790-8>