



## 3 WAYS TO TAKE MENTAL BREATHERS

If you're feeling as though the days are too full and time is too tight, you might need a mental breather. Gain the insights of three experts as they share how you can carve out more room for ease on your busiest days.

'Mental breathers affect cognitive functioning and workplace productivity,' says Jaruska Warricker, Clinical Risk Specialist at Life Health Solutions. Stress triggers the fight-or-flight response, causing increased heart rate, hyperventilation, and blood flow redirection. Continuous stress leads to physical symptoms like neck and back pain, and even heart attacks, just to mention a few.

### WHAT DOES A MENTAL BREATHER LOOK LIKE?

Prioritising mental well-being is crucial, with breathing as a quick solution. Jaruska recommends a simple breathing exercise: focusing on 'breathe in, breathe out,' inhaling deeply through the mouth or nose and exhaling through the mouth while clearing the mind.

This technique signals safety to the body, halting the stress response. It not only aids in sharpening focus but also in easing feelings of overwhelm. The specific technique matters less than the primary goal of oxygenating the brain and breaking the stress cycle. Breathing exercises are versatile,

and usable anywhere, anytime, whether driving or at a desk. Jaruska suggests grounding techniques for anxiety, engaging the senses to reorient to the present and regulate breathing, signalling safety to the body.

### ANOTHER WAY TO FILL YOUR CUP

'What is mindfulness?' asks Yandiswa Sifuba, Yandiswa Sifuba, Specialist Case Manager at Life Health Solutions and Affiliate social worker in private practice, defining it as being fully present and aware without judgement, engaging fully with tasks and surroundings.

In high-pressure workplaces, stress undermines health and productivity, necessitating mindfulness for stress management. Yandiswa highlights mindfulness benefits: stress reduction, emotional intelligence enhancement, and a harmonious work environment.

Mindful techniques like intentional breathing and mental boundaries aid in self-regulation and empathy, reducing fight-or-flight responses. Techniques include intentional breathing, workspace changes, and self-dialogue.

Compassionate meditation fosters empathy through intentional conversations, while manifestation and visualisation techniques connect individuals to their goals.



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Guided imagery and affirmations can also be effective in reducing anxiety and reinforcing positive beliefs. Try some of Yandiswa's suggested affirmations the next time you need a mental breather:

- I am grateful for the abundance of opportunities available to me
- I am confident in my abilities and trust my own judgement
- I actively seek out and embrace challenges as opportunities for growth
- I am committed to excellence and continuously strive to improve my skills and performance
- I am surrounded by supportive and positive colleagues who contribute to a fulfilling work environment
- I am thankful for my job and the opportunities it provides me
- I am successful in all that I do, and my work is a reflection of my talents
- I am deeply fulfilled by the work that I do, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute value to my organisation
- I am confident in my ability to attract and create financial abundance
- I am confident in my ability to handle any challenge that comes my way
- I approach each day with positivity and determination
- I am a valuable asset to my team and organisation

## MORE ABOUT THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF MENTAL BREATHERS

'Mental breathers offer a spectrum of benefits,' explains Adele Jacobs-Dietrichsen, Affiliate Social Worker and Life Coach in private practice. 'Techniques like mindful breathing ground individuals, enhance self-awareness, and stimulate creativity,' she says.

'Coupled with grounding techniques, these methods empower individuals to return to the present moment with sustained attention, aiding in stress reduction and promoting problem-solving skills. Additionally, guided meditation, when practised regularly, can have a profound impact on physical and mental well-being,' Adele explains.

## GETTING STARTED

'When implementing mental breathers,' suggests Adele, 'create a mindful environment by minimising clutter and distractions and incorporating calming elements like plants or nature-inspired decor.'

She advises scheduling mental-breather moments after meetings and discussions, as well as including brain-breather exercises beforehand to promote mental well-being.

*The information is shared on condition that readers will make their own determination, including seeking advice from a professional. E&OE.*



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